



## DOCTOR OF BUSINESS (DBA)

### Offenders to University

### Potential routes for offenders to access Higher Education

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# **Offenders to University**

Potential routes for offenders to access Higher Education

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration  
(Higher Education Management)

University of Bath  
School of Management  
November 2014

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## **Abstract**

Currently, offender education, in general, is inadequate in supporting offenders to progress to university, succeed in Higher Education (HE) and progress into sustainable employment. In the community the picture is grim regarding offender education with little literature or policy to support academically able offenders to break free of low-level attainment constraints imposed by institutionalised stereotypical support mechanisms. What little exists is focused on low level attainment: a little Maths and English and basic employability support. Probation staff are ill-equipped to support higher ability offenders due to lack of systems, limited educational offer and funding systems and targets that are designed to support short-term crime reduction targets, at the cost of well documented educational needs of offenders.

What is not so well documented is that there is a significant minority group of offenders who are capable and could progress to university, if they had support, encouragement and a probation education system that acknowledged that not all offender needs are linked to basic skills and behavioural issues. It is this one size fits all education system that is at the heart of poor attainment, progression and success and this has been repeatedly reported through independent studies from OFSTED. If probation cannot support lower level education attainment above the minimum standards expected by government, what hope is there for higher ability offenders to access support and education to enable them to progress to HE?

This study aims to contribute to the policy debate in community based offender education in the UK by answering the central research question of this thesis: How do you design a community based offender education model that incorporates support to access Higher Education? Preliminary aims include exploring alternative delivery and funding models to encourage and support offenders in and into Higher Education. This fresh approach to offender education is aimed at reducing marginalisation and increasing participation in HE.

The literature review has been segmented into three chapters. Chapter one explores the current situation of offender education, using the Leitch report as a structure of enquiry. Chapter two progresses onto vocational training, NVQs and unitised accreditation as possible routes for offenders to gain access to higher-level skills. The final chapter of the review explores a possible model for the formation of a self-funding organisation formed for the purpose of supporting offenders towards and

throughout their HE journey. This chapter uses literature drawn from corporate university texts and case studies of charitable organisations.

There are overlapping themes throughout this document, drawing on a wide scope of literature to determine the benefits to individuals, organisations and society as a whole of the development of an organisation designed to help offenders gain access to support, funding and progression in and into HE. Each chapter of the literature review highlights existing knowledge on the subject area and this has influenced the design of the methodology of this study i.e. stakeholder analysis using case studies.

Changes to policies related to funding for higher-level education for offenders, attitudes and perceptions of offender education and ability and support structures to help offenders achieve their true potential are required. The conclusion of this thesis demonstrates that the current offender education system in the UK is inadequate and potentially subjugates those offenders who are capable of progressing to higher education, either due to not knowing how to progress to HE, normally due to intergenerational poor levels of education, or due to having other barriers that need supporting whilst studying for a degree.

Higher education is proven to change life aspirations, positively affect health and impact on families and communities for generations. Why not for offenders?

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## **Introduction**

The massification of higher education is a success story of modern higher education policy and the investment that government, stakeholders and students have committed to raising education standards in the UK. The aim of this massification agenda is linked to increasing the UK's global competitiveness through highly skilled workers in its existing and emerging industries, maintaining the UK as a global industrial superpower.

This thesis focuses on the aspirational journey towards Higher Education for offenders in the community. With so many crimes occurring (estimated 7 million per year) and 3.9 million being reported (ONS, 2014), there are potentially a large amount of offenders in the population that should logically be able to progress to higher education. It is estimated that approximately one in four adults in the UK have a criminal record (Roberts, 2013). In reality offender education focuses on the majority of offenders with deficiencies in English, maths and employability skills and, through policy and lack of resource, ignores offenders who may be able and willing to progress to higher education.

This research explore the myths, perceptions, policies, frameworks and realities of education support systems for offenders in UK communities and how fit for purpose they are in supporting offenders to access higher education. There is an exploration of the current literature, progressing onto discussions and research aimed at presenting a potential framework for supporting and funding an organisation tasked with supporting this niche group to higher education. What this research does not attempt is to design an offender university, but does explore frameworks for supporting offenders to and in higher education using data gathered and analysed from offenders, stakeholders that currently support offenders, including prisons, probation, offender charities and education providers, and examines how Higher Education Institutions currently support offenders through policy and practice. As this is a controversial subject and therefore potential government funding for such a venture maybe difficult to justify in times of economic recovery, the findings from this research could be potentially used to support the formation of a self funding organisation to support offenders to various types of mainstream higher education and for them to be able to access the benefits that higher education may bring.

Perceived and real barriers to Higher Education (HE) are increasing year on year. Higher tuition fees, student debt and undervalued undergraduate programmes are to list just a few. This trend has resulted in a percentage of those who would have entered HE, learning in Further Education (FE), apprenticeships or employment. Higher enrolments in FE have enabled FE providers to be more selective about who they admit, which in turn has helped FE providers to increase perceived quality of provision. This trend has also had an adverse effect on those hard to reach learners trying to access support in a reduced funding environment. Why take the risk on hard to reach learners, when you can cream the crop and work with those learners who have a higher chance of success? When success is also linked to reputation, working with learners with a criminal history is a risk that some institutions may not want to take.

So what of the widening participation debate? This has not disappeared; academics are writing with vigour, even if it is with the fond memory of the past tuition fee free days of HE. What is still missing from this debate is HE for those hard to reach groups, those very hard to reach groups: the ones that most University admission teams would shiver at the thought of... *offenders!*

Before embarking on this research, I spoke to professionals, practitioners and academics in the fields of education, offender management, prison education, the police and, of course, offenders. When we started to discuss the subject of my research, designing a model to support offenders in and into university, the room would normally go silent, an uncomfortable silence. After a great deal of probing and questioning I found out why. Offender education currently concentrates on the lowest common denominators of education, the building blocks: Maths, English, basic computing and, in well organised probation areas and prisons, some basic Level 1 or 2 vocational skills. Where there were examples of longer courses, they were limited by short term funding (normally from a grant), or the provision had ceased through poor performance or lack of referrals. There are numerous examples of degrees being studied in prisons, as long as the offender has a long enough sentence. In the community, post release from prison, or for those offenders who never find themselves in prisons, the support towards HE is rare. Consistently, probation services have demonstrated that they are not equipped to support offenders to HE. Therefore, most offender education providers concentrate on basic skills and short courses, as this is where the majority need can be found along with the funding. This

is due to government priorities and it is seen as good basic provision and low risk to quality, success measures and reputation.

There is something wrong with offender education for those offenders who can, and who are willing to, progress to higher-level qualifications and university degrees. This is a gap in the literature, well worth investigating. With so much research showing that HE reduces poverty, improves health, reduces dependency on government for benefits and reduces crime, why HE for offenders has not been researched previously, seems a reasonable debate to have. This question will not be directly explored through this research, but, through the case studies covered later, there are interesting insights into this area that are explored as part of the research.

What follows examines how a viable model for supporting HE for offenders could be designed. The model looks at the needs of offenders and those organisations that support them, current curriculum models used and how to learn from them. An investigation was completed examining: 1) What students require to access higher education (literature review); 2) What support offenders want (interviews with offenders); 3) What universities do to support offenders (an analysis of policies and interviews with universities), 4) What existing offender support organisations do (stakeholder analysis using case studies) and 5) Research of potential business funding models for the O2U (case study analysis).

Once a robust picture of the current need was explored this thesis progresses onto looking at corporate university models in both HE and corporate organisations. The purpose of this is to explore a sustainable business model for such a venture through examination of a range of organisations that support offenders. This combination of adding to the academic stock of knowledge, informing policy and potentially developing professional practice is in the true spirit of the Doctor of Business Administration degree programme.

Whenever you speak of a corporate university model for offenders, academics normally ask, “Where is the University” “Where are your students?” “Where is your Board of Governors?” The Offender U model that you will read about in this thesis is firstly, the corporate model: a corporation created to generate funding to support offenders to access HE and to support them throughout their educational journey. That same organisation may support learning to degree level, working with universities to ensure breadth of curriculum and academic vigour. It is not the

purpose of this research to design a university for offenders, but to design a corporate model to support offenders to access HE, a model that is suitable, credible and accessible, even to those with a criminal history. Those same students may be workers who help the Offender U generate sustainable funding. This is the essence of the corporate university, where there is investment in workers to improve the performance of the company and its corporate goals.

Another question HE practitioners ask when discussing with them the Offender U is, “How many students will the Offender U support?” The model developed in this thesis is one of realistic expectations. The core recommendations are based around funding generation, supporting offenders in preparation towards the skills needed to complete a degree programme and continued support during a degree programme.

Chapter one of the literature review (“The Need”) explores the relationships between current research in HE (designed to encourage socio-economic transformation through widening participation and maximising human capital), and current policy on education, training and employment (ETE) for community based offenders in relation to possible progression to HE. Leitch described a plan to transform adult education in the UK, to boost GDP and the UK’s global competitiveness. This chapter unpacks Leitch and focuses on the factors of widening participation in HE and maximising the potential for offenders to progress to HE. Leitch was chosen as an aspirational, but historical viewpoint of where we should be. This is to demonstrate that current theories in widening participation and human capital in HE could have positive effects on criminal behaviour through boosting offender uptake of higher level qualifications, increasing employability and sustainability of employment and ultimately reducing the levels of adults incarcerated in the UK.

Chapter two (“The Curriculum”) looks at the main types of education that offenders currently interact with (basic skills and vocational training) and how this may prepare offenders with the skills they need to study at HE level. Most offender education in vocational skills is delivered at very basic levels and would not prepare offenders for education. This chapter looks at both British and European vocational training models and discusses how useful they are as a preparatory tool for HE students.

Chapter three, “Designing the Offender to U model” is a summary of the barriers that offenders may face. This serves as an introduction to the later stages of this thesis: current corporate university models, stakeholder values and how the Offender to U

organisation could be staffed, supported, funded and formed as a corporation.  
Towards the end of the chapter there are recommendations that led to the choice of methodology.

## **Chapter 1: The Need**

Little research exists on offenders rehabilitated through education in the community or offenders who are released into the community with or without supervision. The workings of the probation system have been largely unexamined in this thesis, even though research states that re-offending rates reduce when offenders are rehabilitated in the community (McNeill et al., 2005, Bonta and Andrews, 2007, Unit, 2002). It seems that the British probation service focuses on immediate re-offending risks and, where education is concerned, the lowest common denominators of educational attainment levels are prioritised at the cost of offenders progressing to higher levels of education. This chapter demonstrates the need for further research to evaluate the needs of all stakeholders and to build a viable model for delivery that encompasses preparation and support through education pathways to university level attainment.

The rhetoric of government of 68% of adults to achieve a level three qualification and 40% of the adult population to be qualified to degree level by 2020 (Leitch, 2006), does not take offenders into account. Offenders are not generally encouraged or supported towards HE attainment, nor are they educated towards factors of regional demand in such predictive employment models as the stock-flow model (Ehrenberg, 1991). There are some pockets of exceptional graduate and postgraduate level education for offenders, but these tend to be based around distance learning models as seen through the Open University.

Most research in offender education has been focused on offenders in custodial care. This research adds to current theory, as it looks at the positive move towards actualisation of social inclusion and the massification theory in HE and compares it with that of actual offender rehabilitation strategies in place in the UK probation areas. There are large gaps in equality of access to education at a higher level in the community based offender market and this research recommends areas of improvement and further research.

Equality is normally understood as 'equality of competitive opportunity' (Gomberg, 2007). This statement is a theme that this thesis considers, as it explores the issues of community based offender education and progression routes to HE. This thesis specifically looks at the relationships between current trends in HE, which are designed to encourage socio-economic transformation through widening

participation, and the current policy regarding education, training and employment (ETE) for community based offender education in the United Kingdom (UK).

In 2006, the Leitch report on prosperity for all in the global economy - world class skills (Leitch, 2006), described a plan to transform adult education in the UK, to boost gross domestic product (GDP) and the UK's global competitiveness. This would be achieved through increasing the efficiency of the British workforce using investment in skills development and boosting productivity through higher levels of education for all.

Globalisation is placing increasing pressures on British industry. This can be particularly seen among less skilled occupations. Forecasts suggest (Capello and Lenzi, 2013) that there will be substantial increases in the numbers and scope of higher qualified workers and reductions will be seen in the less qualified end of the worker spectrum in the UK. Additional policy changes as a result of the Leitch review were predicated on drawing further attention to these changes (Bosworth et al., 2008). Some of these policies we are now starting to see in the increase in tuition fees and the disparity in support between full time and part time students (Bennion et al., 2011), both of which may have a negative effect on the target group in the study.

The overall aim of this chapter is to identify possible areas of development in the field of widening participation in HE for community-based offenders and to explore the societal and capital benefits of investing in such a venture. Using the Leitch report as a structure of investigation, this chapter focuses on the academic literature of widening participation and the human capital argument in HE. Furthermore, it is linking research in the area of offender education to demonstrate that current theories regarding widening participation and gaining human capital through investment in HE, could have positive effects on criminal behaviour and potentially reduce crime.

Not only is there research that proves that educational attainment levels are directly linked to lower crime and longer life expectancy, there are also direct financial benefits to the British economy. It is estimated that a one percentage increase in the amount of adults in the UK with GCSEs at grades A-C or equivalent, could benefit the UK's economy by up to £320 million per year through reduction in crime (note that this figure is for burglary alone). If there was an increase of 1% in offenders becoming graduates there could be a saving to the taxpayer of up to £461 million and

a 5% increase would equate to £2.3 billion per year in reduced crime (Feinstein, 2002). Economic return aside, the benefits to families, individuals and society as a whole of offenders accessing HE would be apparent and therefore encouraged by the general population, supporting a self-fulfilling demand to support this group (Feinstein et al., 2007).

### **1.1 Unpacking Leitch: The Offender Perspective**

The Leitch report sets out a far-reaching reform agenda for post-16 education and primarily focuses on employers' responsibilities to invest in their workforce. At the core of the report there is the establishment of an employer Skills Pledge. This is an opt in agreement that commits employers to ensuring that every eligible employee should be helped by their employer to gain basic skills (literacy and numeracy) at a minimum of a Level 2 qualification, equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A to C, even though the same report states that productivity improvements are not generally seen until workers are competent to Level 3.

There is a generally held belief that those on lower incomes are more likely to be victims of crime and more likely to commit crime. Offenders in general tend to have fewer qualifications and, if they do possess qualifications, these tend to be at a lower level. The social barriers to higher levels of education tend to lead to poorer pay and employment prospects. Over half of offenders have no qualifications whatsoever compared to the rest of the British population where 15% do not have qualifications. *"Skills can affect crime by improving an individual's employment, pay and progression and hence increasing the opportunity cost of offending, and by reducing income inequality"* (Leitch, 2006). Putting Leitch's words more simply, if you give someone something to lose, e.g. a career, a house, a family etc. they will be less likely to commit a crime. Leitch goes on to quote Feinstein (2002) who found that the benefits of reducing crime were directly linked to increasing educational attainment.

Regarding higher-level qualifications, Leitch also has aspirations of increasing the British graduate population to 36% by 2014 and above 40% by 2020, compared to 26% in 2005, the year of the report. This was to be achieved by an increased focus on widening participation and the massification agenda in HE, aiming for a 50% average participation rate. However, according to the Department for Innovation, University and Skills, where HE is proven to result in a higher return on investment, employers and learners alike would be expected to contribute towards their



education. The focus on free or heavily subsidised education would stay on the lower end qualifications. In 2009 the level of subsidy for graduate level qualifications, in the realms of work based training, was 57.5%. This was reduced further to 50% in 2010, which in itself may help maintain social barriers for progression towards higher educational attainment (DIUS, 2007). In 2013 the fee support for Level 3 and above work-based training for adult learners reduced again. In most instances there will be zero government funding available, with the government loan system being extended to these lower level qualifications. Paradoxically, in sharp contrast to this message of increased fees, Leitch stated, *"It is critical that access to university is dramatically improved so that young people from all backgrounds have a fair chance of attending"* (Leitch, 2006). This fair chance has developed in a reduction in funding and increased exposure to potential lifelong debt.

An essential part of the service described by Leitch was the creation of a careers service accessible through a variety of channels according to individual circumstances and preferences: face-to-face, online, by telephone or by a combination of these. A 'no wrong door' approach towards advice and guidance should be adopted and the quality and appropriateness of the support received should be the same, irrespective of where the support is sourced. This would be enabled by multiple sources of information being accessible at one location, convenient for the client (Leitch, 2006). This service was piloted through the Nextsteps advice and guidance service until 2012, when the new National Careers Service took over. This flexible service would offer all adults the opportunity of three advice sessions on outcomes linked to the development of skills, employment and/or sustainability of employment. Although in principle this would be a good service, due to the limited nature of three sessions, those adults with complex needs would need to be referred onto other provision, which may or may not be available. Any service that supports offenders towards HE would need to be based around advice, guidance and, potentially, mentoring.

By 2020, the report recommends that 95% of all working age adults must have basic skills in both functional literacy and numeracy; more than 90% of adults should be skilled to GCSE level or to vocational equivalents; there will be a shift in the balance of intermediate skills from Level 2 to Level 3; the number of apprentices is to be boosted to 500,000, with improved quantity, quality and esteem for intermediate skills and there is a target of exceeding 40% of the adult population achieving Level 4 or above.

The shorter-term implications of the Leitch report, according to DIUS, are related to, and this is unsurprising, funding to help cope with the estimated 5,000 extra students per year who will want to study at a university for an undergraduate level qualification. This has resulted in a call for a new funding model from the Higher Education Council for England (HEFCE) (DIUS, 2007). Leitch does state that *“One of the most powerful levers for improving productivity will be higher-level skills. Postgraduate, or Level 5 skills, such as MBAs and PhDs, can provide significant returns to organisations, individuals and to the economy as a whole. These higher-level skills are key drivers of innovation, entrepreneurship, management, leadership and research and development”* (Leitch, 2006). Although Leitch does recognise the importance of undergraduate, and especially post-graduate, education, he indicates that it is inappropriate to target the educational sector on higher-level qualifications. This is probably due to lack of resources, funding and forecasted reactions from the press.

Leitch seems to have skimmed over the surface of one of the most fundamental widening participation issues to be placed on HE. Increasing the numbers of people participating in HE, who come from non-traditional or disadvantaged backgrounds, is not achievable in the short-term and will require a long-term and unrelenting approach to achieve incremental improvements in all areas of recruitment, teaching, learning and support. This will need to be seen for Universities and all other institutions, which prepare students to progress onto HE as well as for employers. In the field of research, Leitch states that the sector skills councils will take the lead on what types of training are needed by employers. *“Improving the quality and quantity of senior research staff in Higher Education through employer collaboration and investment, will facilitate greater levels of knowledge transfer, innovation and dialogue between leading employers and leading academic specialists in universities. These objectives must become important components of any assessment of research quality, as the system is developed to take the place of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)”* (Leitch, 2006). In response to this, in 2007/8 HEFCE announced £60m of quality related research funding that was allocated to projects related to the amount of business income generated by universities. The government has also made a public commitment to ensuring that future research assessment mechanisms take account of user-led research, which could have the positive effect of bringing employers and academics closer. This heightened focus on research, combined with the perceived lack of funds for undergraduate education and, without

targets for increasing teaching at postgraduate levels, seems to conflict with the essence of Leitch's recommendations. Without macro level interventions in all educationally related disciplines, Leitch's HE aspirations, some of which are not clearly defined, will struggle to be realised, especially in the time frames stated in his report.

The report explicitly comments that "*economically valuable skills*" must be delivered through a demand-led approach, facilitated by a new culture of learning, an appetite for improved skills amongst individuals and employers, and increased engagement and investment by employers and educators alike. According to the report, this can be achieved by channelling public funding of adult vocational skills through the employer responsiveness training fund; previously Train to Gain and Adult Learner Accounts. Although both of these schemes no longer exist, they paved the way for their replacements in the form of adult apprenticeships (Level 2 to Level 4) and the new career development loans for the over 23 year olds. There are recommendations for "*strengthening the employer voice*" on skills through the development of a Commission for Employment & Skills, and reforming the current sector skills councils, which, it is thought, will simplify and approve vocational training that is valuable to boosting productivity in specific sector specialisms. Through these new and improved ventures, Leitch recommends launching a new skills pledge for employers to increase learning at work and increase employer investment in higher-level qualifications, especially in apprenticeships and degrees at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. By significantly increasing training in the workplace, it is believed that this will raise employers' and employees' aspirations and awareness of the value of skills. If significant progress is not achieved by 2010, then Leitch proposed that the underlying obligations of the skills pledge system be made compulsory. Leitch neglects to mention how that could be achieved. Now nearly a decade since the publication of the Leitch report, there have been some visible changes to the focus related to recommendations from the report. There is no evidence that Leitch's recommendations have reached offender education regarding skills development beyond the most basic of skills development (Nacro, 2013). Where HE is mentioned in offender education policy review, it seems to be a token gesture and states that offenders should be given the same access to funding as other potential students (BIS, 2011b), as detailed in the Browne Review (BIS, 2010).

Over the last 20 years, the participation of different segments of the British population in HE has steadily risen (Shattock, 2007). This has not been seen in one small, but

significant, part of the British population: offenders. Less than 1% of offenders are graduates (Hudson, 2001) and therefore it could be argued that the social and health benefits that go hand in hand with higher qualification attainment may be omitted for over 99% of the offender population. Graduates tend to live longer and are less likely to be involved in crime (Brennan and Naidoo, 2008), especially where employability is embedded into a graduate education (Knight and Yorke, 2002). This may be related to the estimates given by the Department of Education and Skills that the lifetime earnings differential of graduates over non-graduates is as much as £400,000 (Greenaway and Haynes, 2003). One should beware of these impressive figures which are contradicted in a later study which states a more meagre £141,539 for males and £157,982 for females (O'Leary and Sloane, 2008). These figures, however, do compare in work adults and do not use unemployed, under educated offenders as a benchmark.

Before progressing with the literature review, the outcomes of the Leitch review, generally should be commented on. Although this thesis has used Leitch as a historical perspective of where we should be, it should be noted that Leitch did not just get it wrong for offenders, but for the majority of the UK (Wolf, 2007, Tomlinson, 2012). Leitch recommended four key areas of improvement under the strapline of "Our Future. It's in our hands" and famously stated "History tells us that no one can predict with any accuracy future occupational skills. The Review is clear that skill demands will increase at every single level." As we have now seen, this blanket approach to skills development has been predictably wrong (Wolf, 2009).

Raising awareness and aspirations was at the heart of this comprehensive document through new initiatives and targets for educators, government and employers. The central issue here is that Leitch states level three and above is what is needed, but backs down when it comes to targets (Durrant, 2012). Only recommending targets for lower social-economic groups to access up to level two learning through their employment, not linking higher education and the workplace, except through a small mention of higher apprenticeships.

Although using Leitch as a structure for investigation, Leitch is open to criticism due to the nature of reading into the future, especially where it comes to the "naive conceptualisation" of demand-led, by employers and industry, skills development in heavily systemised structures such as further and higher education (Tomlinson, 2012). In one part of the document he states that the future is unknown, then later

states what should happen to support future labour demand. The main issue here is the longevity of the Leitch's predictions up until 2020. With such a prescribed approach to the report, it seems implausible to follow with the changes that we have seen since 2006, let alone until 2020.

This aside, Leitch is still a very good central framework to use as a discussion tool to explore the needs of offenders related to education and the potential benefits that higher levels of education may bring.

## **1.2 Browne review of skills**

The Browne review of HE and funding was published in October 2010 and took HE by storm. This next section explores what it potentially means to offenders aspiring to enter HE.

Currently, 45% of post-compulsory education learners progress to HE in the UK. HE for the masses has been achieved, but as previously explored, offenders are still amongst the minority in perceived and real barriers to accessing HE.

Pre-Browne, universities were grant funded or with capped low tuition fees. These capped fees seemed to put universities at a disadvantage in international markets and may have affected inward investment. Without inward investment the worry was that our established exemplary reputation in the UK might weaken.

Throughout the review, Browne stated that disadvantaged groups from the UK were still under-represented in HE. This was in the light of more people going to university, but from the same types of background. Reflecting on our offender cohort, who had a higher potential of receiving free school meals at school, there was no change in access to HE. Something needed to happen through reform.

There is an argument for fees stating that those who are lucky enough to go to university will earn more throughout their lives, therefore their education should not be paid for by other taxpayers who may not earn as much in their degree free lives. If one cannot access, or chooses not to access, HE, why should one pay for others to study? According to the OECD (2010), HE benefits the individual 50% more than it does British society. With this in mind, logically, students should pay for their education.

Browne suggested abolishing the cap on tuition fees altogether and therefore creating a more competitive market. In reality, the government placed a £9,000 per year cap on fees, but there are rumours that this is set to rise again. This may seem to disadvantage hard to reach groups even more, but there will be a requirement to support learners from disadvantaged backgrounds further. Learners can borrow the fees and pay them back when they earn over £21,000 per year, which is an increase on the previous level of £15,000. If earnings drop again, below the threshold, payments stop also. If earnings are below the threshold, there is no real interest accumulating. If earnings are above, and the loan is being repaid, there will be a small interest rate of inflation plus 2%. After 30 years, if the loan has not been repaid, students will be debt free, no matter what their personal situation at the time. This is a much simpler system and, from the perspective of a practitioner supporting offenders to access Further and Higher Education, an easy system which incentivises learners to take a loan. By taking a loan the learner takes on an extra level of responsibility for the commitment they have made, with the reassurance that if they earn more than £21,000 per year, they will be in a good position to pay back a small percentage of their loan each month. **Students ask: So what do we get for our extra money?**

Browne foresees regulation around detailed descriptions of course content and support that is available. We are progressing through a more consumer led HE system, where learners see themselves as customers and education providers are in competition for students and their money. Annual surveys, league tables, marketing and reputation are key, but now the eight P's (Lovelock and Wright, 1999) of service marketing are in full force in this new commercially driven market. (Product elements; Place – Cyberspace and Time; Promotion/Education; Price/other user outlay; Process; Productivity; People and Physical Evidence).

Some good potential news for offender beneficiaries is found in the report relating to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. There is an acknowledgement that it costs more to support these groups through university. There will be targets linked to funding to provide additional support and to support completion of degrees by these target groups. Advice and guidance on how to access this additional support is essential, or there is a risk of potential beneficiaries not knowing how to access value adding services.

With all this extra support, competition and the move towards a service marketing

culture in the HE sector, Browne recommends an expansion of around 10% of the sector to cope with the anticipated increase in demand for HE. Many pro-vice chancellors probably celebrated this section of the review, as previously there were rumours of reductions in volumes.

### **1.3 The Human Capital Discussion**

The view of the role of human capital in HE is normally controversial, but now in the UK it is at the forefront of most universities' change processes. This is primarily due to the British Government placing a great deal of pressure upon institutions to be the vanguard of the Government's recovery plan for the recession in the UK, using universities as market driven institutions (Shattock, 2007, OECD, 2011). The task for both legislators and the academic establishments is twofold: to make HE work for the politicians and those students who are lucky enough to be transformed by the process; to make it serve the hypercompetitive nature of economic, social, technological, environmental, international and demographically linked factors that have emerged over the time that HE has become commonplace in the UK (Newman, 2004, Adcroft et al., 2010). As manufacturing and the more manual occupations are eroded by more technically and academically challenging professions, there is a need to maximise human capital and ensure that taxpayers receive maximum return on investment, through primary to Higher Education routes that the British taxpayer funds. In May 2009 the 23 month old Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) was merged into a new department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), to place greater pressure on universities to be accountable to and drive business recovery in the UK (Reisz, 2009). Although some universities do not like the thought of becoming accountable to industry, through a shopping list mentality for industrial development being common place, there is substantial empirical evidence in favour of the human capital argument to help the UK beyond the recession into planned prosperity (Adcroft et al., 2010).

Before moving further into the human capital affirmative argument, it is worth mentioning the need for ethical discourse when planning to use HE as a strategy for exiting recession, promoting social mobility and the transition from industrial to a knowledge based society. Walker quotes the Burmese pro-democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi, *"who reminds us that true development of human beings involves much more than mere economic growth"* (Walker, 2006).

On and off the job education improves not only skills and expertise, but also motivation to improve productivity in both professional and self-developmental contexts (Becker, 1993, Stevens, 1999). It is hard to disagree with the point of view that universities add to society in many ways and that pure cultivation of human capital for the good of industrial and economic purposes would be foolish (Abramovitz, 1993). Education can benefit participants in many ways including life expectancy, health, preparation for work as well as the way in which education can benefit society and family units as a whole (Naidoo, 2004, Molla et al., 2004). This chapter does not advocate that a strategy of only human capital development should be followed, but it does promote the view that universities need to be held more accountable to taxpayers and that, just as societies needs change, universities need to adapt to deliver the skills and expertise that society needs to flourish.

The theory of human capital implies that it is possible to *“apply cost benefit analysis to decisions about education expenditure in the same way as rates of return are used to analyse the profitability of investment in conventional physical capital”* (Little, 2003). Research has shown that human capital is an important and communicable growth factor in social and economic growth and competitiveness at local and global levels (Lee and Barro, 2001, Mankiw et al., 1992). Academic excellence in a subject area, be that pure academia or vocationally related, is directly linked to productivity factors and also has indirect impact on production through the development of new systems and technologies. Factors have been used to measure the volumes and levels of education, educational level of workers and managers and the number of entrepreneurs and managerial professionals, and these have all been used to measure human capital. This information has also been used to compare national economic performance on an international scale (Lee and Barro, 2001, Creedy and Gemmell, 2005). In support of human capital development through formal education routes, Iyigun found that individuals accumulate more knowledge through a formal academic educational process than through work experience alone (Iyigun, 1999), with results that support business efficiency and growth. A lack of formal human capital development throughout the education journey, and of additional support structures, will affect economic growth, especially in a recession (Braconier, 2012). This does not negate the value of on the job training, but argues in favour of delivering education to workers before they enter the workplace and to those who need re-training to enter a new career path. Having access to a formal education is a highly efficient method of accumulating knowledge and maximising the levels of human capital through technological advancements and innovation. It is also a highly



efficient way of ensuring that dissemination and distribution of knowledge (*"absorptive capacity"*) is carried out by educated individuals who progress into employment (Acemoglu and Pischke, 1998, Cameron et al., 2005, Engelbrecht, 1997).

Some other studies argue that the amount and quality of schooling at various educational levels, such as primary, secondary, FE and HE, can only reflect the cumulative level of human capital, but cannot show the dimensions of human capital (Vandenbussche, 2006, Lee and Barro, 2001). These studies lean towards the need to make a distinction between the significance of human capital at different levels of education. This is needed to determine a number of key factors including for example; whether skilled HE teaching and research activities contribute towards the development of economies. Unskilled human capital gained through primary and secondary education is more likely to be used to undertake the more commonplace activities in unskilled professions. This is not the only effect of an unskilled labour force as, according to Vandenbussche (2006), where high human capital exists in an economy; this can result in growth enhancement whereas a higher proportion of unskilled labour can result in growth depressing forces. In some environments a lack of progress to HE may not be through choice but because of perceived circumstance (Gomberg, 2007). This can be seen in socially deprived areas in the UK and in the third world, where lack of HE means that the under educated classes end up doing menial tasks on lower incomes, as they are further away from technological frontiers. This could also lead to job insecurity as technological and educational barriers increase (Vandenbussche, 2006, Naswall and De Witte, 2003).

So far this chapter has focused on the benefits to society and industry of human capital development. The question of many students, workers and parents is 'What's in it for me?' Education is fast becoming a consumer driven market in the UK, following trends seen in the United States and other market driven education systems. Education in its most basic forms could be seen as the creation of minimal capabilities, which humans need to survive beyond access to food and shelter. Basic literacy, numeracy and computing skills are a minimum in the majority of jobs in the UK, but to break free of lower societal constraints, something extra is needed to compete in an ever-increasing knowledge based economy. This will not only give the educated access to higher incomes, but also to the ability to function in normal life, namely, appearing in public without shame (Checchi, 2007). This is a basic human right and therefore the state is obliged to provide its citizens with access to

educational services that are at least in line with legislation. The European Convention on Human Rights (Article 2) was drafted to ensure Europeans had access to education. This is further reinforced by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26(2)), which reads *“Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship...”*. Although this key piece of legislation does not mention specific human capital practices, it does recognise the importance of education for the masses in creating health, wealth and a peaceful society. Also there is an assumption that citizens should participate in education. This is legally enforceable up to the age of 18 in the UK now. However, is that enough for those who are disadvantaged through being under educated especially for the focus group of this thesis, offenders, where the right to retraining or vocational training is negated for rehabilitating offenders (Lithuania, 2000)? Education is linked to equality and as Gomberg quite rightly stated; it is normally understood as *“equality of competitive opportunity”* (Gomberg, 2007). Unlike some more emotionally detached logical authors on this subject, educating a few high profile elites, with the hope that the high profile nature of the educated will cascade benefits down to the masses, seems to push the cost effectiveness of education argument too far (Owen, 1998). As education is linked to health, wealth and social mobility it should be accessible to all. For those who are yet to realise their academic ability and value to themselves and society, support structures should be available to help potential learners participate in developmental education.

#### **1.4 Widening Participation**

In 1963, the Robbins Committee (Robbins, 1963) helped to justify the development of British HE, in response to social demand, with the aim of opening up HE to a wider breadth of society, primary benefits being identified in health and wealth (Bell, 2009). Although this was designed to expand HE, it contained some assumptions that may have limited maximum growth, as the report also put forward the so called *“plate glass university”* as seen in the UEA, Stirling, Lancaster, Warwick etc. (Beloff, 1975). Some of the more significant of these values are: “(1) the monopoly by state supported institutions of study leading to degrees; (2) their commitment to high and common academic standards for the honours degree; (3) a degree earned through full time study over three years and (4) the costs of student maintenance and instruction mainly being taken responsibility for by the state” (Halsey, 1993).

In FE and HE there are inequalities by socio-economic status, gender and ethnicity as well as other factors including learning and physical disabilities and a criminal record (Scott, 1995, Becker, 1993, Blanden and Machin, 2004). In adult education it is common to speak of these barriers to learning. According to research there are three types of barriers (Garland, 1993): (1) Situational barriers could include being able to finance the education, perceived lack of time to be able to study and perceived distance from a learning opportunity, which could be looked upon as physical distance or a perceptual distance related to socio economic status, current employment or exposure to adequate role models (Lynch and O'Riordan, 1998). (2) Institutional barriers can be seen in the timing of courses (e.g. enrol only once per year) and how institutions recruit new learners. There are also links to the size of the classes, structure of the learning and how flexible the institution can be to accommodate learners with specific needs (Coffield et al., 2007, Thomas, 2001). (3) Dispositional barriers are regarding the individual motivation and dedication to learning, which may be the result of the learner having experienced the wrong type of learning for their personal style. The most common source of this can be seen where learners have had poor educational experiences in their own early compulsory education (Thomas, 2001). Research states that there are patterns that can be mapped, "*learner trajectories*" (Gorard et al., 1998a), which are influenced by personal learning experiences throughout life, from childhood to formal and informal learning in adulthood. According to O'Brien and O'Byrne, when we look at widening participation in learning the key factors we look at are: time, place, gender, family (be that siblings or social/professional families) and a learner's initial compulsory schooling (Thomas, 2001).

Barriers to participation in education, perceived or factual, contribute to reducing the amount of adults obtaining a good quality general compulsory education. This affects post compulsory education attainment and may reduce access to opportunities for lifelong learning in and out of the workplace (Gorard et al., 1998c). A further effect of poor quality compulsory education is that it may result in a reduction in the possibility of a university level education being within the realisation of every adult in the UK (Coffield, 2000). To reverse this inequality there will need to be a change in government policy towards flexible part time HE, but this may be too costly for some universities (Lynn and Paula, 2010, Fazackerley et al., 2009). Education and training delivery to the UK population should be of an exceptional standard and distributed reasonably. The aim of this is to educate the individual, which in turn affects the

British economy, social integration and mobility and has positive effects on health and wider societal factors (Becker, 1993). Recent focus to maximise participation in learning to the masses has been influenced by individuals, organisations, governments and other power structures. It is a common held belief that individuals participate in lifelong learning based on a personal calculation of economic benefits to be gained from education and training (Becker, 1993).

If it was an easy process from the concept of economic gain through continuing education to the education process itself and to reaping the rewards of educating oneself, why are there so many under educated adults in the UK? There are issues that need to be discussed regarding this argument: firstly, the removal of learner participation linked barriers. Secondly, as individuals participating in developmental learning affects the performance of society as a whole, all those organisations and individuals that could influence, support or affect potential learners need to ensure that these benefits become part of individual decision-making processes and organisational and governmental policy making. These factors have been discussed in numerous government documents since the 1990s, for example the Dearing report (National Committee of Inquiry into HE et al., 1997, recommendation 3), where progress is to be measured by GDP and educational attainment levels to mention just two of an overabundance of proposed indicators of success.

‘Barriers to learning’ is a commonly used term that is useful to describe patterns of participation among different gender, ethnic and socio-economic groups. Using this methodology as an approach to widening participation is simplistic at a conceptual level: remove all the barriers and learners will participate and prosper. Research suggests that there are several barriers that potentially face learners when considering or participating in post compulsory education. It is these barriers that must be overcome for these potentially academically detached groups, be that voluntary or involuntary, to engage with HE (Gorard et al., 2007, Burchardt et al., 1999).

The most common barrier to undertaking an undergraduate education is the cost: the cost of participating and the short-term cost of not being in employment. Working class families are less likely to participate in HE. This includes those adults who are normally the main income earner as benefit entitlement is affected by participating in education for more than 16 hours per week (Gorard et al., 1998c), as the individual needs to be seen to be able to take up a job if one is available. These costs are only

the immediate ones. When this becomes part of a larger perceived burden of on-going student loans and debt related to HE, the perceived risk and workloads outweigh the long-term gains, especially when dealing with offenders, who tend to be focused on shorter-term goals. Although it is worth noting that there is no evidence that social background affects achievement grades for degrees, when different social groups study together, in Higher Education, successful students are admitted regardless of social background (Kettley, 2007).

Loss of time is another perceived factor of cost, particularly regarding social life and time allocated to families. Committing to a course of study involves a change in lifestyle: time to attend college or university, time to study at home, assignments, research, dissertations and so on. This seems to be easier for those who have no family commitments, e.g. children or being in a long-term relationship. This may affect women more than men, as they are normally the gender that is perceived should look after the children, where women are less likely to participate in HE in later life (Gorard et al., 1998b). All of the factors described here are undoubtedly more sensitive for the poor, for those who are in debt or with financial commitments that are perceived to be too large to be put on hold for three years whilst one goes to university (Tight, 1998, Bowl, 2001, Meyer et al., 2013).

Education barriers at institutional level can be seen in the procedures that organisations use in the areas of; marketing; entry procedures and requirement; timing and size of provision and the lack of teaching and organisational flexibility. In FE colleges, which were set up primarily for post 16 to pre 19 year old students, are now being forced to adapt their delivery methodology to cater for the growing need for flexible delivery, especially with the increased focus on work based learning. Learners often have broken patterns of participation and very different routes of progression (Gorard et al., 1998c). Dropouts are commonly caused by people perceiving that they are on the wrong course. This is partly the blame of training provider not giving appropriate initial guidance (Maguire et al., 1993). Learners, especially those from deprived backgrounds, need to understand better the full range of financial help they could receive (Coffield et al., 2007). Another cause of lack of participation or high dropout rates could be seen in the lack of appropriateness of learning provision (Raffe et al., 2001). Even when academic establishments recruit learners, those studying may not actually be on the course that they actually want to study (Gorard et al., 1998c). This lack of access to suitable provision denies some adults the opportunity to learn in an area that will interest them and to migrate

socially and it reduces the ease for those who wish to return to education after large gaps of time since leaving school (Coffield, 2000). The situation across the UK is inconsistent for potential students to gain access to the information they need to participate in education fully. Barriers to learning through lack of information are even harder for those who are less motivated or are influenced by social groups with abreactions to education progression as a route to prosperity or for individuals with poor experiences of previous education which may influence obstacle creation for continuing education, especially where the adult has poor literacy and/or numeracy skills (Thomas, 2001).

The unemployed, especially the unemployed offender, should in theory be more motivated to learn as self-identity in Britain is strongly linked to employment (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000). Lack of motivation to work and therefore study becomes a substantial barrier for those who are less motivated, long term unemployed or to those who class themselves as unemployable, due to past criminal convictions, where qualifications may be seen as useless.

As stated previously, low participation levels of lower income groups in HE seem to be proof that cost is a barrier. Therefore, logically, by removing this cost the barrier will be reduced. Grants and fee remission for those on low incomes or who are unemployed are possible solutions to this barrier. However, there seems to be little evidence that giving education away for free or at a reduced cost affects the uptake of HE for these groups (Wakeling and Jefferies, 2012, Coffield, 2000).

Removing barriers to participation is not easy and this fact in itself is evidence that a more holistic view of barriers to learning is needed. This is particularly the case when dealing with offenders and ex-offenders where there is the possibility that lower socio-economic factors may be intensified by the fact that offenders tend to look for 'quick wins', focusing on the present and not on three years hence when they may have passed a degree. This makes this group more prone to part time and modular study, which are on the increase in the HE sector (Blanden and Machin, 2004, HESA, 2011). This seems good news for our target beneficiaries, but these programmes are not supported sufficiently to cover the costs of part time degree programmes when you compare the student financial support information at £1,085 per year (BIS, 2011a) and an average part time degree cost of £1,800 per year.

Another side effect that may affect learners from poor academic backgrounds who then develop themselves academically to gain access to degree level education, is that they may gravitate towards those universities that have been established recently to aid the widening participation agenda, and therefore they may gain access to a second class education (Thomas, 2001). This factor is worsened when populist newspapers state that a graduate education may not influence them securing a job at the end of their studies (Coffield, 2000)

### **1.5 Offender educational attainment and the links to employment and re-offending rates**

Similar to other criminal justice systems, one of the major issues facing the British criminal justice system is "...recidivism among offenders. Although some studies suggest a link between post custodial sentence, unemployment and crime..." (Kethineni and Falcone, 2007). Others have taken an opposing hypothetical approach and believe unemployment to be the main risk factor linked to reoffending. These two perspectives differ further where Ross and Richards (2003a) hypothesise that "...by providing offenders with employment opportunities, housing and someone who believes in them", it is theorised that recidivism rates will reduce. Pollock (2004) takes the more analytical and seemingly more realistic approach: *"employment, housing, family adjustment, influence of old friends and the difficulties and loneliness of the outside world are the main barriers for ex-offenders"*. Resettling into a pro-social existence, away from crime is the best route to not reoffending. Both of these perspectives seem common sense, but it is evident that the current community based offender support network needs to be improved to help offenders overcome these barriers to re-offending, using educational attainment as one of many tools to achieve this macro level goal.

A 'one size fits all' approach is also proven by research to be ineffective, leading to the strategic problem for offender management and offender educators of stimulating the targeted delivery of education, catering for individual offender needs (McGuire, 1995). This individualistic approach also needs to be linked to potential employment factors, as this is so closely linked to re-offending. It should be the duty of offender educational services to provide education, training and qualifications that are sought by British industry, and not to only focus on the lowest common denominators of educational attainment. As these targets originate from government, this trend will not change until the targets change.

Across the globe, prison populations are increasing due to domestic judicial systems and high re-offending rates (Giorgi, 2007). A proposed solution to alleviate the pressures on the prison estate is community-based punishment with embedded rehabilitation, life skills and education as mandatory elements. This approach of mandatory elements for all instead of the few is controversial, but research has proven that it can reduce re-offending rates. MacKenzie (2001) evaluates detailed research by Andrews and Bonta (1994), Andrews (1990), Gendreau (1996) and Lipsey (1992) which all conclude that community based rehabilitation and punishment is more effective than incarceration, regarding the reduction of re-offending rates, by up to 11%. This is in stark contrast to other community based interventions seen in the British criminal justice system, where deterrence and incapacitation take precedence (Chui and Nellis, 2003). Examples of ineffective strategies of deterring re-offending can be seen when offenders were asked if electronic tagging would keep them out of trouble. Only 46% said yes (Shute, 2007). Wearing high visibility jackets identifying offenders as criminals repaying a punishment debt to society is another high profile policy example (Justice, 2008a). Both of these have been proven to be ineffective in the past (MacKenzie, 2001).

The tasks associated with integrating offenders back into society are rife with issues and plagued by high re-offending rates in the first twelve months of conviction or release from prison (Justice, 2008c). This is more common for offenders under the age of 30. There is a lack of coherent and consistently evaluated educational provision in the community and, based on the presuppositions of Ross, Richards (2003) and Pollock (2004), this probably contributes towards increased rates of re-offending, as most offenders lack the basic employability skills that can help them to go back to society and live constructively like others. The difficulties of addressing offender educational levels are intensified by the focus on lower level education as it may seem easier to achieve NOMS key performance targets, but this sabotages offenders' long-term educational attainment potential. This focus on lower educational attainment is not led by employers, current recommendations or the needs of offenders. This seems to discount learners who may wish to progress onto higher levels of education. Lower level basic literacy and numeracy are an important starting position, but what offenders need is access to the best educational development that suits both their needs and the needs of industry, at all levels from FE through to HE (Leitch 2006). Although there is a need for higher levels of education, most offenders need access to flexible start dates and, in most cases,



short-term achievable goals, which could be achieved through the delivery of unitised accreditation. As time and flexibility are barriers to learning for some offenders, it is important to help offenders to identify and be supported towards suitable FE and HE establishments.

Offenders and ex-offenders are usually at a risk of social exclusion once they are released from prison. They are faced with multiple disadvantages as far as their integration into society is concerned. Once they are released back into society, they feel that they are not accepted like other members of society. There is still a very high degree of social exclusion and stigma as far as reintegration of these offenders back into society is concerned. Those who work with offenders, ex-offenders and those who are at a very high risk of committing an offence, have described offenders' lives as chaotic (Cherry, 2005). Though there are various institutions that "have been put in place in order to deal with the problem" (Ross and Richards, 2003c), offenders, in general, perceive that they will never be accepted back into society like other people. They perceive that they are still seen as criminals who are probably going to re-offend and are therefore being punished through lack of opportunity.

Lack of proper integration into society makes them have reduced chances of starting their lives again. Therefore, most of them prefer to commit familiar crimes again and return to the world where they feel that they belong. With time they become institutionalised and re-offending becomes a way of life. There are not consistent, national, formalised structures that can support offenders in order to help them to secure employment and start their lives again. Funding for this worthwhile endeavour is cyclical in nature. Where funding comes to an end, there are often gaps in provision, waiting for the next fundable project to come along. The educational provision in community based offender programmes is mainly aimed at literacy, numeracy and basic employability needs. Although these are valid to enable offenders to be able to read, write and search for jobs, they do not give access to market led, vocationally linking qualifications and training which would give offenders access to positive differentiation in the labour market.

The life of offenders in a prison and the life outside prison become two different lives that are not compatible. In prison there is a sense of equity as all inmates are prisoners managed by the prison estate, rules and regimes. Once released from prison, they are faced with another life in which they are seen as offenders and criminals, and where managing their routine becomes the offenders' own

responsibility. The difference in these two lives makes it difficult to integrate offenders back into society where they belong (NOMS, 2006).

A possible initiative to combat this dilemma would be to establish a community based offender support network, in the case of this study, aimed at supporting offenders through an education journey. The criminal justice system could make it a mandatory part of a sentence plan for unqualified and unemployed offenders to participate in vocational education (with even the possibility of a reduction in sentence when the offenders achieve pre-determined goals). This should be aimed at the commercial needs of British industry, to enhance the possibility of employment post training/completion of sentence. For those offenders who can access HE, why not mandate HE? This approach may work for basic levels of education, but forcing offenders to learn may be difficult. With the aim of progression to HE there would need to be the support network, but making it mandatory should not be a part of it.

While it is in the interest of the government and the whole of society to safeguard society by containing offenders, there are some special interests in offenders that go against the need for containment. The criminal justice system has been torn between meeting the interests on the growth and development of offenders and the need to contain them, as a way of controlling the level of crime in society. This perceptual battle has been further intensified by the media and public opinion, that community based offenders serving sentences should be seen to be being punished. Recent suggestions in the media have included wearing high visibility jackets identifying offenders in the community and ensuring that offenders only do the jobs that normal citizens would not normally want to do.

An example of successful community based offender education and rehabilitation can be seen in a part of the criminal justice system in the United States, which has been undergoing change in juvenile conviction and imprisonment. In the past, the establishment of approved schools and the consequent imprisoning of young people have not helped to improve their status, but on the contrary, have made them more radical criminals. Coupled with this is the need to help offenders to access basic education that can help to make their future better. Containing offenders in US prisons reduces their chances of accessing quality education. Therefore, the correction system has been changed in order to accommodate community rehabilitation of young people. This helps them to access their education and at the

same time there is a perception that it helps their parents to play an effective role in rehabilitating their children (Latessa et al., 1997).

The British offender educational model seems to be opposite to that of some US states. In most British prisons there is well established educational provision, providing not only the basic building blocks of education, found in literacy and numeracy, but there are construction, ICT and numerous other vocational education programmes, although none of these are mandatory and they are aimed at pre-level 2 levels. HE can be seen in prisons, but this is normally reserved for inmates serving long-term sentences, usually life. The Open University is the main provider of HE in prisons, but there is little evidence to show that many released prisoners continue to complete their degree, if not completed in prison. In the realms of community based offender learning, there is mainly fragmented delivery focused on the delivery of basic literacy and numeracy skills, referring all other needs to externally sourced periodic and further fragmented support and educational provision. HE is not a target for probation services and therefore is not supported.

One of the most important ways of reducing the rate of crime in society is by empowering offenders with life skills, vocational qualifications, structured contact with offender friendly employers and mentoring from a pro-social perspective, that will help to make them independent (Cherry, 2005). At the moment in the UK offenders face these complex issues with interventions being coordinated by an allocated offender caseworker. Due to the generic skills related to the criminal justice system, this approach seems flawed and ineffective when dealing with complex educational issues, as the offender caseworker is primarily concerned with reducing the risk of re-offending (Ellis and Winstone, 2002).

In 2005, the government enacted a green paper (DFES, 2005) that was aimed at reducing re-offending through skills and employment. This was one of the most important steps in fighting re-offending. Under the new strategy, offenders would be helped to become self-reliant and reduce their engagement in crimes through educating them to gain skills and helping them to get employment after being released. Yet again this new way for rehabilitating offenders was focused on the prison estate and neglected the offenders who are sentenced to community based probation orders, even though the government has acknowledged the growing need for community-based provision (Burnett and Roberts, 2013).

Research has shown that the cost of re-arresting, convicting and re-sentencing to prison a re-offender is more than the cost of educating an offender to higher levels of education and imparting life skills and employability skills. In numerical terms a prisoner who re-offends has been shown to cost the government more than £65,000 from the time they are re-arrested to when they are re-imprisoned. After that the prisoner costs more than £37,000 per year to be maintained in prison. This is just the numerical cost and it does not take into account the cost to society. There is also the obvious link and impact on the levels of crime and the cost in mobilisation of government machinery to fight these crimes (Feinstein, 2002). This is one of the most important facts to justify the need to have the offender motivated away from re-offending. This can be positively influenced through taking appropriate measures that will promote empowerment of offenders to become self-reliant, giving them something to lose in life and therefore motivating them to be law abiding citizens.

Although community based rehabilitation systems have been argued for most when it comes to young offenders, it is also important when it comes to dealing with adult offenders. For the youth, the main reason behind community-based rehabilitation has been to enable them to access their education whilst remaining under parental care. For adults, it could help them to maintain links to society and at the same time help the government to save a lot of money that is used in maintaining offenders in prison. Therefore, the main issue here is whether correcting offenders in prison helps to reduce the rate of re-offending, when compared to those who are put under probation to be punished and rehabilitated in the community (Burnett and Roberts, 2013, Challinor et al., 2007).

Where community based correction (CBC) has been successfully used in the US and other places in the world to reduce the rate of re-offending, it provides offenders with sanction, supervision, and with treatment in the same community where they, hopefully, perceive they belong. A study carried out showed that the CBC had the same effectiveness and, in some cases, it was shown to be a more effective intervention in deterring the rate of re-offending. This system was used to correct more than half of the sample US State offenders. The growing preference for CBC has been based on the success it recorded compared to prison based rehabilitation. It also costs a lot less.

The same study found that empowering the community based offender programme with the capacity to give education to the offenders, helped to reduce the rate of re-

offending by more than 40%. This shows that, instead of the UK government spending large quantities of money in containing offenders in prisons, there should be a British version of the CBC programme, freeing up funding that could be used towards providing effective education aimed at sustainable employability for offenders. Including HE in this potential journey would ensure that those that can access HE are supported to their full potential.

In the US example, there have been working structures put in place in order to support the operation of the programme. In order for CBC to provide effective management of the offenders, which represented almost half of the offender population of the State, staffing had to be increased by more than 37%. At the same time there was enactment of legislation that stipulated the level of crime that could be corrected at the CBC. For example, all murder offences could not be put under community probation. This also came with increased spending in local holding facilities, electronic monitoring, especially for the juveniles, and increased spending on the streamlining of the education programme. The education system also used previous community correction intervention literature that targets attitudes, beliefs, values and support for the offenders in order to change their behaviours.

There was also intensive supervision of the offender in order to track the progress in the change of their behaviours and regarding skills development. This seemed to be an important step in order to decide whether to keep the offender under the CBC or to send them to prison if they did not record an improvement in their behaviour. Electronic monitoring was used in conjunction with other systems in order to monitor the progress of the offenders. For example, the telephone might be fitted with a breathalyser to test the use of alcohol. The monitoring office also used handheld monitors and drove past the offenders' schools or homes in order to verify that the offenders were at the required location stipulated in their supervision orders. The day programme was designed to be more intensive and is treatment oriented as compared to the regular probationers.

The lessons learned from the above examples show that, in order to have an effective system of community based offender education and rehabilitation, there has to be participation across all areas of offender supervision (Mills, 2002). It calls for the need to have an effective working programme in place that ensures all the participants are playing their part and understand the needs of other stakeholders.

Therefore, it is based on working structures that define the role of every party (Bush, 2003).

Research has found that a qualification is an important step for offenders when they enter the world of work (Schmallegger and Smykla, 2007). With qualifications they are usually taken to be equal to other people and therefore able to compete effectively. However, certificates are given for those who have achieved academic qualification while life skills are ignored. The world is changing and the need to have a working rehabilitation system that recognises the need to qualify offenders to higher levels has become more important than ever in the criminal justice system. While there has been a rising trend of introducing offenders to education, the others who cannot access, or are reluctant to access education are ignored. In some prisons a working education system has put in place rewards to help offenders according to their level of commitment to gaining qualifications. This helps prisoners to gain access to skills and hopefully employment upon release, with optimistic reduced rates of re-offending (Lukies et al., 2011).

This chapter shows that little research exists on offenders rehabilitated through access to HE in the community or for offenders who are released into the community under supervision. It seems that the British probation service focuses on immediate re-offending risks and, where education is concerned, the lowest common denominators of educational attainment levels are prioritised at the cost of offenders progressing to higher levels of education. Moving from prison, an institution of total control, to the often perceived as chaotic environment of loneliness, unemployment and, with possible contact with previous offender networks, can lead to repeated re-offending patterns. The curriculum design and availability is possibly an influential factor on this, which we now explore in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 2: The Curriculum**

Considering the design of offender specific support services, it should be noted that for many offenders, accessing mainstream, full time HE may seem unachievable due to financial and socio-economic barriers. Vocational training, unitised accreditation and preparation of offender learners to access HE may be supported better once offenders are fully aware of the requirements and commitment required. This could also ensure that only motivated learners enter into a relationship with HE. As with most relationships, there may be a need to be mature, prepared and to experiment

with a shorter-term commitment before entering into a longer term full time or part time relationship.

Commented on in the previous chapter was the fact that most offender education is targeted at the lower levels of the education spectrum. In some isolated cases, there is vocational training to Level 2. With the aim of supporting offenders to be prepared for the HE journey, does vocational training prepare them to progress onwards to degree level? This question will be answered in this chapter. There is a greater focus by government on higher apprenticeships and degree equivalent vocational programmes that can be completed in the workplace. These programmes could be used to prepare offenders for HE or used for the purposes of credit transfer into degree programmes at university. It is worth noting here that with the expansion of further education providers into HE level programmes, any reference to HE is related to degree level programmes.

This chapter explores the implications for learners of current vocational training policies and arrangements in the UK, including the extent to which learners can progress to higher-level qualifications. This forms part of the argument that vocational training is being diluted and risks affecting the usefulness of NVQs and apprenticeships in the workplace and their effectiveness as a preparatory tool for progression to HE, where worker productivity is achieved. With the focus on vocational training for those who cannot or do not want to access HE, poor preparation of workers to access HE may be a contributory risk to organisations reaching their potential and competing in an increasingly competitive global market. In the case of our offender target groups, this poor preparation may deter them from the HE journey or contribute to poor preparation and potential failure of achievement.

The terms “*Higher Education*” and “*higher levels of education*” are used interchangeably as an indication of degree level qualifications, be that vocational or traditional university degrees.

The term “*educated person*” is predicted to change, from a degree-wielding academic to an educated person who has amassed a stock of knowledge through lifelong learning, vocational education and practical experience (Drucker, 2009). Although this does not negate the importance of academic skills, society is now starting to recognise, again, the importance of skills as well as knowledge, with the workplace

playing a key role in learning where subjects are mobilised in modern workplace-learning situations (Edwards and Nicoll, 2004, Williams and Hanson, 2011).

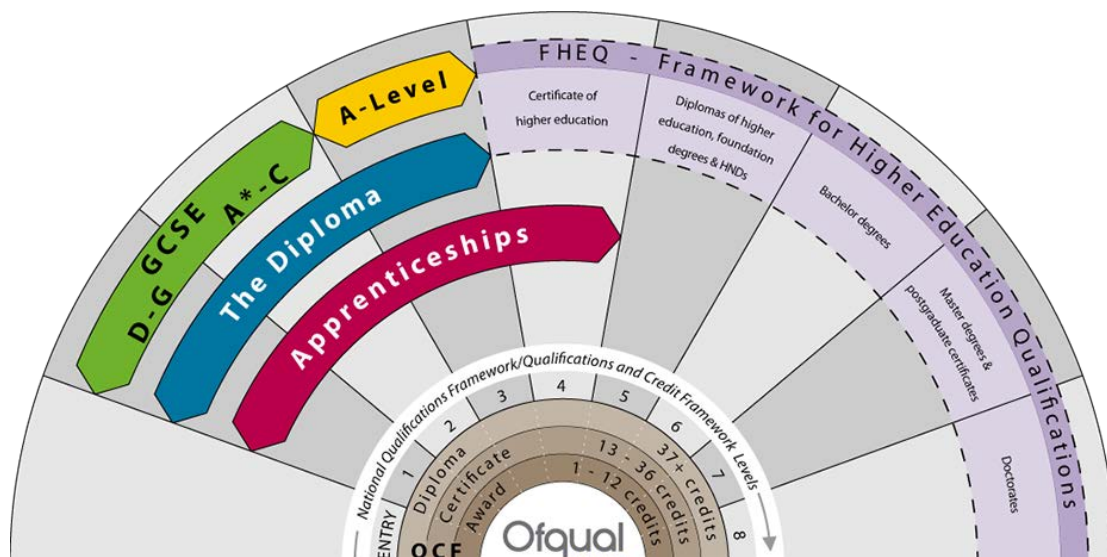
There is a word of warning that goes with lifelong learning with its human capital agenda. Some critics see the emergence of lifelong learning as real education as a risk of the abandonment of the *“traditional significance for education of the struggles for personal development, justice and social equity”* (Edwards, 2007).

Apprenticeships were in fashion for hundreds of years and now they seem to be back, as we have started to notice that our workforce is getting older and our youth workers lack the skills to maintain global competitiveness. Vocational education and training (VET) is often labelled as delivering a narrow set of skills or as a method of assessing existing skills to an accreditation framework. Vocational training is an essential part of lifelong learning and offers access to qualifications for adults who may have missed opportunities in mainstream education or need to be trained in sector-specific technical tasks. For the more technical professions, VET systems are a valuable source of preparing employers' workforces to be flexible and sustainable at both organisational and labour market levels.

Recently, there have been European-wide developments in the standardisation of vocational training systems. Some commentators have stated that the changes are to the detriment of quality, as the new standardised European VET model is based on that of the UK. The UK model focuses on learning a narrow set of skills, whereas the majority of other European models are more aimed at skills and knowledge attainment. This credit-based VET system has been designed to enable cross-border recognition of qualifications, in whole or in part, to help improve the relevance and transferability of vocational training across the European Union and, possibly, around the globe. Some commentators have stated that this move away from a more academic VET model has effected transferability of skills and progression to HE (Powell et al., 2012).

The main purpose of this chapter is to explore the usefulness of vocational training as a tool for preparation towards progression to higher-level qualifications, where research proves productivity and value is added at Levels 3 and above. To put this discussion into context, see table one below for an explanation of the levels of academic attainment that will be discussed.





**Figure 1: Qualifications: what the different levels mean (OFQUAL, 2013)**

The main difference between VET and HE gained in the traditional university environment, can be found in the example of apprenticeships. In apprenticeships, VET shapes early specialisms whereas traditional HE is more generic and is designed for employment preparation. There is a need for the differentiation that VET systems offer, for the sake of society as a whole, because, if the shift in focus towards traditional degrees continues, there is the risk that workforces may become sterile and not focused on performance (Drucker, 2009).

Throughout this document there are discussions around social actors found under the guise of government agencies, funding bodies, Sector Skills Councils and employers. Most of the social actors seem to be uncoordinated in terms of using vocational training to improve the UK's performance and they seem to be focused on enrolment numbers, not which curriculum areas could add value to the economy as a whole. These disjointed power structures are easily incentivised by funding. This funding is focused on raising educational levels of attainment but does not adequately focus on the skills needed to support progression to higher levels of education, especially degree programmes. There is a clear focus of financial incentives towards lower-level attainment (e.g. Level 2). The fact that the British National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) system assesses a narrow set of non-academic skills, acts as a further hurdle in using VET systems in the UK as a preparatory tool to enable learners to be prepared for progression to higher levels of education.

## **2.1 European harmonisation of vocational training: assessment of skills, knowledge development or progression?**

There is an on-going debate in Europe regarding the worker's role in becoming employable, lifelong learning and competence-based approaches to VET. Following the ratification of the Copenhagen Declaration of 2002 there were celebrations from some over the union of Vocational, Education and Training (VET) approaches throughout Europe (Raffe, 2002). There were also commiserations (Rauner, 2008) from some European countries who felt that the new European-wide VET system, based on the English model, was diluting an already robust high-skills, high-wage VET framework (Powell et al., 2012, Culpepper, 1999, Finegold, 1988).

This chapter was the first leg in the journey towards understanding the adequacy of the English NVQ system as a preparatory route for HE, by looking at the context of the formation of a European Qualifications Framework. It was imperative to understand that the VET system's flexibility could become so flexible that it loses value to learners and to prospective employers and dilutes the usage of this educational route as a preparation for potential HE students.

Vocational training is defined as:

*“Vocational education and training (VET) is an essential part of lifelong learning which covers all relevant levels of qualification and which should be closely linked to general education and Higher Education. Lying at the heart of both employment and social policies, VET not only promotes competitiveness, business performance and innovation in the context of a globalised economy, but also equity, cohesion, personal development and active citizenship”* (Council, 2008).

Commentators have primarily looked at the differences between the VET systems of England and Germany due to the differences of the understandings and meanings of commonly used terms (Brockmann et al., 2008). The main distinctions that have caused the most conflict across the Channel have been between the mainland European knowledge-based VET model, as seen in Germany, and the skills-based model that is used in the UK.

The main goals of the Copenhagen process were to develop Europe into a world-leading dominant and competitive knowledge-based market by 2010, in the same

action bringing about social cohesion across Europe and worldwide recognition for European qualifications (Council, 2008). This implies cooperation on common goals across Europe in the areas of occupational and vocational education frameworks and acting in a unified manner to innovate GDP across very different systems of education and workforce development.

This attempt to bring a unification of different VET systems has led to three key activities being formulated:

- (1) The development of instruments to encourage transparency for qualifications and competence across Europe. e.g. European CV; certificate and diploma supplements; the Common European framework of reference for languages and the Europass into one single framework.
- (2) Definitions of the criteria for the quality of vocational education offers and programmes.
- (3) Implementation of a system for adaptation and transmission of educational activities (ECVET, following the example of the European Credit Transfer System – ECTS – established within HE) (Rauner, 2008).

A primary value of this new framework can be seen in the European system for credit transfer in vocational training (ECVET). ECVET uses vocational qualifications as a common currency across Europe (Rauner and Bremer, 2004). In addition to these objectives, there has been a push towards the validation of informal, normally non-accredited, training, the development of inter-disciplinary vocational training and the European-wide use of the accreditation of prior learning. This reinforces the theory that practical knowledge or know-how is a recognised form of knowledge. The English model merges practical knowledge and formal knowledge, whereas the continental models do not (Brockmann et al., 2008).

The process of a standardised approach across Europe has been criticised (Council, 2000) due to the sheer volume and variety of VET programs and certificates (Ertl, 2006), but the importance of the destination of this policy i.e. cross border standardisation of education systems, seems to warrant the journey (Europa, 2008). The main reasoning for the ECVET system was unification of common standards and it is this that seems to also be the main argument against its possible effectiveness. These arguments focus on the differences between vocational training practices organised in the workplace and the incompatibility of very different systems of work across Europe.

The English VET model focuses on narrow skills sets aimed at assessing skills in the here and now, where the only skills development is aimed at supporting the student to pass the current qualification. The German VET system, however, focused on a wider knowledge-based set of vocational skills in preparation for progression, innovation and flexibility (Fischer and Rauner, 2002), which are organisationally desirable traits looked for in a workforce (Edwards, 2007). These differences are also seen as a possible source of compartmentalisation in national skilled labour markets, which is not what the Copenhagen process was attempting to achieve.

Modular units that assess standardised skills seem to be the most attractive route due to the flexibility and transferability of being able to celebrate unitised success during the amassing of new marketable skills. These units are then allocated points that theoretically can be used in a number of qualifications in a variety of disciplines, resulting in the easing of the process of accreditation of prior learning and credit transfer to other qualifications, across Europe.

The English NVQ system, with its modularised assessment structure, is what the EU model seems to be based on. This system is very flexible but does not constitute a vocational training system: it is an assessment system and could actually be used to accredit previous competences without any further training. This is probably why the EU government found this process so attractive within the agenda of the accreditation of prior knowledge.

The essence of this process is the creation of real job markets that guarantee movement of workers and international recognition of qualifications (not just graduate-level degrees). Vocational qualifications have been looked upon as second class, behind those of university-orientated qualifications, but could be formatted in such a way as to encourage progression, as well as adding value to workers' skills sets in their employment (Jenkins et al., 2007). Across Europe, learners, parents, employers and politicians have a problem with the identification of quality qualifications that will aid employment, boost productivity and offer recognition, especially where traditional degrees are recognised automatically for the level that they are.

The strength of this process seems to also be the main problem within the Copenhagen process. Through the encouragement of a European education market

that is based on a modularised process, where it is possible to transfer credits to multiple disciplines, it could result in qualifications becoming very abstract and possibly devalued in the labour and HE markets. Qualifications are made up of modules and modules are accredited with points indicating their weighting and value. One could say, satirically, that this is reminiscent of the popular TV host, Bruce Forsyth, who used to say, *“Points make prizes”*. Gain enough points and you make a qualification. As learners can transfer in credits, it is possible that some units can be used in multiple qualifications, missing the opportunity to further develop these skills.

Some British awarding bodies launched *“progression awards”* (NOCN, 2009) that give students a qualification aimed at generic employability skills, up to Level 3, based on points collected in multiple disciplines. This type of qualification seems to be aimed at the most disadvantaged members of society; probably the target group that would benefit the most from structured and focused vocational qualifications. It is recommended that these progression awards be regulated by a recognised authoritative body and the structure of such awards should not be left to the judgement of awarding bodies or training providers (Cushnanhan and Batman-Tafe, 2009). This would avoid unscrupulous providers of education massing enough points to make up worthless qualifications and, in the realms of the English funding system, using government funding to pay for them, as, once accredited, these routes become eligible for funding.

In addition to this, there are some critics that have shown that standardised processes on a macro scale are often resisted, partly from traditionalism and partly because it is perceived that more significant educational purposes are being protected by national frameworks. Young describes evidence that suggests that the hopes and dreams of a unified European VET system, which are associated with standardised frameworks, are normally unrealistic (e.g. accreditation of prior learning) (Young, 2008). Young's sentiment is echoed in a later paper that criticises the evolved VET system as an *“eagerness to pursue measurable results, while neglecting individual heterogeneity as part of a rich society”* (Lopez-Fogues, 2012). Although, counter to this argument, some commentators see the value in such ventures as accredited prior learning in supporting progression to higher level qualifications (Butterworth, 1992, Howard, 1993).

This development of a European-wide vocational training system, based on a core sector specific list of vocations, with training on knowledge and skills at the core,

seems to be more useful than the existing processes where flexibility adds to the dilution of this noble cause (Rauner, 2008). This common-sense approach seems to be more realistic in the control of standards across Europe and could support offenders to develop more academic skills whilst studying vocational skills, which the current system does not do. The flexibility and uncertainty of the current approach will lead to these systems not differentiating the good vocational education programmes from the substandard and may lead to the further undervaluing of an already undervalued vocational qualifications market. This will undoubtedly result in these qualifications, marketed as a route for progression to HE, not being recognised by most credible universities. In the case of the best universities, e.g. Russell Group, only a select few qualifications with exceptional grades will enable students to access education at this end of the education market (Thompson et al., 2012).

So far there has been little evidence to show that vocational education in the UK is an effective tool in the preparation for progression to HE. It seems evident that there is not a unified process in the current framework to encourage progression to HE, even though the entire process is theoretically based on the premise that the VET process will encourage lifelong learning and progression. For offenders accessing pre-level 2 VET, they have little hope of developing academic skills to support HE progression.

## **2.2 Vocational training in England: VET = Learning and Skills**

To fully understand the role of vocational training in England, this thesis will now explore the recent changes in the structures of the UK's workforce and legislative systems regarding education.

Over the past 20 years there has been a steady decline in manufacturing, and this has resulted in reductions in skilled employment, as the British economy switches to a service-orientated culture. In the growth of such sectors as banking, there has been increased demand for highly skilled labour. However, in the declining manual sectors, where offenders are usually signposted for skills development, there has been less demand for qualifications due to the improvements in technology. Nolan and Slater (2003) commented that this process could be described as an 'hourglass economy', with a highly skilled and highly paid workforce at one end of a spectrum and there being a large gap between them and the lower skilled. For the lower paid, at the other end, the gap is seemingly getting wider between those with the emerging skills

and qualifications and those without. However, there is recent evidence that this may be changing, as the lower classes move up the social ladder, where examples of gaining access to education can be seen traversing social barriers. This follows the up-skilling research in preparation for the new knowledge economy, which has been coming since Drucker's predictions in 1969 (Drucker, 1969). Are we there yet? The jury is out at this stage as to which of the two opposing camps is correct (Powell and Snellman, 2004), but in Drucker's more recent book he is still predicting that the "*knowledge worker*" will be the largest single group in the global population, especially in developed countries (Drucker, 2009).

Even though schools have helped children leaving school to gain more qualifications, more qualifications than ever are being achieved by adult learners and a higher percentage of school leavers and mature learners are going to university. The demand for some qualified staff is less than the available supply (Felstead et al., 2002), which has resulted in employers seeking, not only degree educated staff, but exceptional grades being required as an entry requirement to a career (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). This potentially further disadvantages offenders at the wrong end of the hourglass. Paradoxically, employers still report hard to fill vacancies and skills shortages (Wilson and Hogarth, 2009); even though there are a higher level of graduates, there seems to be a mismatch of higher level courses completed, compared with the needs of industry (McDowell, 2013). This is joined by the fact that educational attainment remains a key determinant of life-chances and is linked to potential earnings per worker (Raffe, 2002). However, there seems to be a growing trend that the right academic attainment counts. This raises the question of whether educators are supplying the correct mix of qualifications for workers to thrive in industry and to promote the learner's desire to take the choice that is not a liberating one but one of responsibility and obligation to educate oneself (Rose, 1999). This supports the notion that all citizens should take responsibility for being employable, for example, by possessing the right skills, qualifications, soft skills and personal characteristics, becoming an entrepreneur of the self. For the worker, being organisationally desirable (higher productivity, efficiency, flexibility etc.) leads to improved self-fulfilment through the feeling of doing a job professionally and through the recognition of a job well done (Edwards, 2007).

Traditionally, higher education in the UK has been elitist. This resulted in the majority of the population seeking employment at the earliest possible opportunity. This group would leave school with little or no qualifications and then learn a trade when they

were employed, in a job that was seen as likely to be a job for their entire life (Gregg and Wadsworth, 2002). These were the days of apprenticeships and a competitive manufacturing industry, whereas in today's volatile PESTEL-linked employment markets, no part of society can afford to become a "*cocoon of security*" (Drucker, 2009). By the mid-1980s, only 56.1% of 16 year-olds stayed on in post-compulsory education (DCSF, 2009a). In 2008, 1.61 million (79.7%) of 16- year-olds in the UK stayed in post-compulsory education, the highest-ever figure (DCSF, 2009b). With more people staying on in education, there has also been an increase of vocational training providers. This has caused there to be unclear differentiation in provision, as providers of VET include schools, colleges, universities, third sector, Sector Skills Councils, trade unions, private providers and such government ventures as Learndirect who subcontract delivery to all of the above. This has led to a 'potluck' culture of being able to access suitable provision, as there is not one single, clear and concise information source on the availability of training to consumers, whether commercial or individuals. Most government funding is driven by age. The split of the Learning and Skills Council further illustrated this, with the creation of the Skills Funding Agency (post-19-year-olds) and the Young People's Learning Agency managed by local authorities, looking after the under 19 year olds.

### **2.3 Post-16 education and training**

Before the 1960s it was customary to leave school as early as possible and enter employment. There was very little vocational training outside of the traditional apprenticeship route. Even apprenticeships were a mix of formal and informal training until the Industrial Training Boards introduced in 1964 (Keep and Rainbird, 2003). Society perceived that apprenticeships were used primarily as a cheap labour source, but the majority of apprenticeships were actually used as a source of acquiring broad occupational skills (Ryan et al., 2007). In addition to this, the whole system was labelled as ineffective in improving skills in industry and it was eventually disbanded in the 1980s (Finegold, 1988).

In 1964, the now-named Sector Skills Councils were formed, with the remit to improve training standards across each of the sectors that they were overseeing. This resulted in improvements in quality of apprenticeships and, subsequently, they became more popular. Unfortunately, however, due to a number of political blunders regarding apprenticeships, enrolments reduced from 218,019 in 1970 to 53,600 in 1990. The most publicised of these blunders was in the 1980s, when the government



introduced the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) to help to reduce rising youth unemployment. This further reduced apprenticeship numbers and the perceived poor quality training further damaged the concept of apprenticeships with learners, parents and employers. This scheme focused mainly on volumes, rather than skills formation in sectors that may be vital for economic growth (Guile, 2006). In 1994 the government attempted to revitalise the newly titled 'modern apprenticeships' across the 15 industrial sectors, with standards overseen by the Sector Skills Councils. Training was delivered by providers or employers, but, most importantly, the apprentices were employees of the company that they were working in, which was in stark contrast to the failed YTS service (Fuller and Unwin, 2003).

Apprenticeship enrolments have now been reinvigorated to approximately 250,000 across the UK in 2012, partially due to apprenticeships becoming available in not only technical professions, but in most job types. Examples can now be seen in customer service, refuse workers, care assistants and teaching assistants. For the more sceptical observers of adult education, there may be questions raised of the value of some apprenticeship frameworks in sectors where a qualified adult then receives the minimum wage, e.g. retail and refuse collection. For some of these examples, care and teaching assistants, this could possibly be for ease of access to market, as in these sectors these qualifications are legally mandatory. Therefore, this gives training providers access to a receptive market of employers, who are motivated through both professional and punitive stimulus, but still rely on government funding for this mandatory training. A point worth noting at this stage is that this compulsory training to Level 2, progressing to Level 3, has had a positive impact on these two sectors' performance (Rosenfeld, 1999). These figures also raise some further questions, as there were only 7,200 (2,500 Level 3 and 4,700 Level 2) new enrolments of 16 to 18-year-olds in 2007 (DCSF, 2008). This possibly indicates that this is supporting a lot of older workers undertaking less valuable Level 2 apprenticeships, rather than supporting progression to higher levels. This may lead to the presumption that the hardest to reach unemployed adults, possibly our offender target group, are using the apprenticeship route to access skills development and the hope of sustainable employment. Many of these adults could be working for £2.65 per hour, the minimum wage for apprenticeships (Behling and Speckesser, 2013).

Apprenticeships are accredited at four different levels; Level 2 is a basic introduction to general sector-specific skills. For more technical skills, Levels 3 to 5 are designed

to ensure that trainees gain craft and advanced technical skills, still linked to the Sector Skills Council and employers' needs. An apprenticeship is normally made up of an NVQ, practical numeracy and literacy skills (usually communication skills and application of numbers) and a technical certificate. The technical certificate is usually the taught element of the skills needed and is later assessed by the NVQ in a work context, focusing on the narrow set of skills deemed necessary by the Sector Skills Councils. Ryan et al. (2007) state that it is only the advanced apprenticeships (Level 3 and above) that should be looked upon as useful apprenticeships, as the Level 2 skills are too generic and remedial in nature to be of any real use in improving business performance. This high-level need is not reflected in the uptake of Level 3 and above apprenticeships, where Ryan et al. (2007), state that Level 3 apprenticeships dropped by 40,000 in five years, whereas Level 2 apprenticeships increased by 80,000 in the same time period. With the more recent increases in apprenticeship uptake, the trend seems to be moving towards Level 3 progression, but there is still a huge focus on Level 2 frameworks, especially for the under 19 year olds. Most of the focus on Level 3 and higher apprenticeships has been seen in the over 19 age group. In 2011/12 there were 390,700 apprenticeship starts from this age group, 233,600 at Level 2, 153,700 at Level 3 and 3,400 higher apprenticeships. A surprising fact here is that 229,300 (60%) of these were by learners over the age of 25 (BIS, 2013a), reinforcing the previous conclusion that many adults are taking lower paid jobs to gain access to employment and an education. This could be viewed as a positive, as lower skilled workers could be accessing skills essential for employment in the future. With the emphasis on Level 2 skills, this does not support progression to higher-level skills development, but it is a start.

There seems to be vast amounts of funding being spent on qualifications with little value to industry and of little use in the preparation towards further study, due to the teaching of narrow skill sets. This may seem a bleak picture, but it is worth noting that a large majority of young employees still only receive the most basic of training in the workplace, even if it is accredited. Therefore, apprenticeships are still the best option for some, but as we will now see, there are direct links between the qualification levels of a workforce and the value that those employees add to their personal financial security and to the performance of their employers.

## 2.4 Qualification levels and labour market outcomes

The next group of post-16 recognised education is further education through NVQs in the workplace and possibly progression to HE. Recently, there has been a shift in the way that government has looked upon NVQs, apprenticeships and progression to HE. In 2004, the Learning and Skills Council pledged that the best way to improve productivity in industry was by *“tackling basic skills and increasing the number of people with level two qualifications, whilst supporting progression to higher-level skills and qualifications”* (LSC, 2004).

In subsequent years, the priorities for 2006–07 (LSC, 2005) and 2007–08 (LSC, 2006) were much more focused on those who did not have any qualifications equivalent to a Level 2 and seemed to negate supporting progression to higher-level skills or qualifications. This focus on Level 2 skills excluded many workers who may have had existing qualifications and the sections on adult learning focused on Level 3 entitlements only for the 19 to 25 year olds.

In 2008 there was a shift in language, where the emphasis was clearly on the importance of focusing programmes of learning, literacy, numeracy, full Level 2 and full Level 3 qualifications on areas that should deliver the most benefit to individuals and the economy. In 2013 the focus was placed on the younger age groups and lower level educated once more, where those over the age of 23 who want to progress onto Level 3 and above qualifications will be introduced to the new grant/loan system, similar to that of university loans (BIS, 2013b). This resulted in funding being withdrawn for Level 3 apprenticeships for those over 23, which halted enrolments overnight on Level 3 apprenticeships, as employers were generally not willing to fund apprenticeships. Six months after the funding block was put in place on Level 3 apprenticeships, the government made a U-turn and relaxed the funding block. Level 3 apprenticeship enrolments for the over 23s then started to improve.

The fact that employability and the levels of qualifications are generally linked to lifetime earnings can also be seen in the unemployed groups in the UK. Both males and females in this group have lower levels of formal qualifications than the employed. Although the most obvious pay differentials can be seen as being due to gender, the levels of qualifications come a close second place in most circumstances (Ryan et al., 2007). Ryan et al. (2007) and Page (2007), go on to state that workers who achieved a Level 2 qualification actually earn less than workers without formal qualifications. Grugulis (2003) reinforces this point and comments that NVQs at

Levels 1 and 2 have no value to workers' earning potential, although Level 2 NVQs are still the main focus of high-profile, industry-focused training schemes. This is further intensified in some sectors where there is a perceived low skills trap where some employees in these sectors see their qualification at Level 2 as a "*badge of dishonour*" (Roberts, 2012), with little chance of progression to higher level qualification or promotion.

The main unanswered question here is, with all the evidence supporting progression to Level 3 and beyond, and with the recent documents from BIS (BIS, 2009), stating that funding will be prioritised towards qualifications that benefit individuals and the British industry as a whole, why then is the available government funding, aimed at vocational training, still so heavily focused on Level 2 qualifications? This could be interpreted as inconsistencies that potentially stifle developmental activities in the workplace and restrict able-minded workers progressing to higher-level qualifications. The counter argument to this is that, with the new loans system now available to vocational training, the responsibility has now been passed to the individual to invest in their higher education. This may seem fair for many, but will certainly act as an additional barrier to learning for offenders who are capable of attainment at degree level.

Some critics of VET at Level 2 and below believe that this route may be used for the less-gifted workers to learn their jobs, hence the reason why they earn less than those who have no qualifications (Dearden et al., 2004). This statement seems over simplified and does not take into account those adults without qualifications who have the ability to achieve at higher levels. Another more realistic reason would be that Level 2 qualifications are funded and identified as a priority group through education targets, so delivery organisations will work to targets and to maximise funding drawdown. Changing the targets and funding would probably result in changes in results for higher levels of education, if the funding and targets were focused on higher education related goals. The next question would be, at what cost? This is probably why the government has introduced the new grant system for the over 23's, so they can hopefully stimulate higher-level learning at a reduced cost to the taxpayer.

Even though the government has not completely followed the recommendations of Leitch, or the majority of pledges in its own strategic documents, supporting the use of vocational qualifications as a tool for preparing learners for higher education is

positive. It seems that these qualifications, in general, do not prepare learners academically for progression to higher-level studies. They are, however, recognised as a significant motivational factor in encouraging learners to progress on to further learning. Be it accredited or not, as long as the training is aimed at increasing productivity or capabilities (Edwards, 2007), and does not just accredit old skills, this is positive. This factor was reported to be more successful if the qualifications were integrated into the workplace, where social practices seem to improve learning (Lave, 1996), resulting in workers volunteering for and seeking out higher-level qualifications (Coulon and Vignoles, 2008). Let us hope that these newly motivated learners, including the offender target group, can, firstly, gain employment, then secure a place in a good university and be able to cope with degree level studies as NVQs and apprenticeships, especially at lower levels, clearly do not prepare learners to study at this level.

## **2.5 The Wolf Review**

Previously, in this chapter, there have been discussions regarding trends in vocational training that have impacted on vocational training being a useful tool to support learners to access HE. In 2011 this trend took yet another turn, this time for the better, when the government commissioned the Wolf Review (2011) to conduct an independent review of vocational education. Although Wolf was asked for this review to be focused on 14 to 19 year olds, its findings have had an impact on the wider vocational training sector and support the argument that this training route does not generally support preparation for HE. This is an important insight into how vocational training has been used with lower attainment level students. What follows is a brief overview of the Wolf report in the context of preparing adults for HE.

Wolf states that 300,000 to 400,000 16 to 19 year olds are studying vocational qualifications that offer minimal value in supporting academic progression or progression into employment, post their completion. The report was formatted as a plea to revise the current system. The report advised that the current trend of incentivising schools to deliver vocational training to children who lack academic ability should stop. This should be influenced through the removal of these qualifications from school league tables and imposing a 20% cap on the amount of time students should be able to spend on vocational training. The focus should be shifted towards a more academic mix of courses, supporting children to be able to progress to higher-level courses and gain the basic skills that employers require. This

argument is diametrically opposed to the ones that are presented for offender education.

Wolf had a number of assumptions when designing the review: 1) All study programmes, vocational or academic, should prepare learners to be able to progress towards employment or further/higher education; 2) Some qualifications are more valid than others and should therefore be treated differently; 3) The current system is complicated and needs simplifying.

Wolf discussed the current labour market and higher education climate, reflecting on the fact that there are fewer jobs for 16 to 19 year olds and that we need to prepare these learners to be able to compete for apprenticeships and Higher Education places. Wolf states that young people tend to change jobs and sectors frequently in the first few years of employment. This is also a common factor seen with offenders. This needs to be supported by the development of generally required basic skills found in Maths, English and problem solving. Wolf goes on to advocate the use of vocational training if it leads to sustainable careers, but warns that there needs to be better support of the basic academic abilities, or risk not preparing these young learners for progression to higher levels of learning in later life. Current Level 1,2 and 3 vocational training does not require these skills to be developed in most vocational subjects. Some trends that may help training organisations to focus their curriculums are: 1) BTEC National Diplomas (comparable to A Levels) are recognised as credible in the labour market and support access to HE; 2) Many traditional trade/craft qualifications support sustainable employment post qualification; 3) There are a large proportion of “Level 2” qualifications that have no value in the labour market, nor do they prepare learners for further or higher education. These qualifications should be assigned a lesser value as a reflection of their value in the labour and academic markets; 4) Apprenticeships are seen as having high value in supporting initial trade training and as a route to higher education. There is some reference to higher apprenticeships, but as this was a new scheme during Wolf’s research, the comments were limited; 5) English and Maths at GCSE are perceived as essential for every learner (this is unsurprising). The report recommends that if learners have not achieved these by 16, they should be encouraged to continue studying until they are 19. Without the basic skills found in these GCSEs, learners will find it hard to progress to higher levels of learning. This is due to the academic requirements of higher levels of learning and entry requirements for most universities and FE colleges for valuable academic and vocational courses. Wolf did not recommend that older

learners who did not achieve their GCSEs should then give up the quest for GCSEs and take a more practical qualification in Maths and English, as seen in functional skills currently delivered in the adult skills sector.

### **2.5.1 General barriers, perceived and actual that learners face accessing higher education**

At this point it is worth exploring the nature of barriers faced by adult learners accessing higher education. These barriers may be perceived or factual, but in real terms act as barriers to all adults, especially the offenders that are at the heart of this thesis. Accessing higher education includes applying, participating, achieving in higher education and surviving the first year of study in an unfamiliar environment (Wilcox et al., 2005).

#### **Geographical**

The location of study can be a perceived barrier to students in accessing learning opportunities. Although in recent years the enrolment trend for HE students originating from urban areas has increased, there is a significant difference in higher education for those who are from the more rural areas of the UK; North East, East Midlands and East Anglia (HEFCE, 2013). According to HEFCE, the reasons for this are complicated, as location cannot be used in isolation as a reason for students not progressing to higher education, but distance travelled is recognised as a major barrier for those who live in a rural area (Mangan et al., 2010). Looking at a map to define distance of potential travel may also be an incorrect presumption, as this issue is perception and therefore may be generalised to any distance that is perceived by the student as not acceptable. It should also be noted here that distance learning is a potential route for our offender groups, especially with admission policies at distance learning institutions, such as the Open University, being friendly towards offenders. The issue of distance then becomes one of not the distance away from peer and family support networks, it becomes the distance away from traditional university based support networks and the close proximity to potential distractions (Muilenburg and Berge, 2001), and in the case of offenders, potential proximity to criminogenic influences.

## **Social**

Socio economic barriers are real and act as a barrier to entering and attainment in higher education. With more students entering higher education, from families that did not traditionally enter higher education, there can be a lack of understanding of higher education and potentially this lack of understanding may lead to students being disadvantaged at pre-course advice, guidance and support through to support during and post course of study (Archer et al., 2005). This gap in real terms can be seen in an estimated 15% variance between the most advantaged groups when compared with the most disadvantaged accessing higher education (HEFCE, 2013). This deprivation factor can be further intensified through gender (women from disadvantaged background are less likely to go to university than men), ethnicity and disability, which is in stark contrast to the general population accessing higher education, where women tend to access higher education more than men (McWhirter, 1997, Blum, 1999).

Once students start a course, socially they will start to interact with other students and become part of an academic community. For new students, balancing social and academic life can be difficult, especially for those from families with non-traditional higher education backgrounds (Archer et al., 2005). For offenders, campus based higher education will also be full of temptations, as many university students find out. With a previous criminal record, campus based offenders may require mentoring through the first term/year to help them cope with new styles of relationships found in the UK's HEI's.

Students will encounter a different sort of independence found in higher education and may also experience some of the factors that traditional students have to cope with, including finding accommodation, managing finances and keeping up academically (Quaye and Harper, 2014). Academically for most offenders, higher education is more challenging and the education experience is different from schools and vocational training, in content and with regard to the attitude and independence required to succeed (Tinto, 1975). Higher education requires discipline to keep on track, where students are responsible for their attendance, success and ensuring that they seek out additional support if required. This may need offenders being offered additional mentoring to acclimatise them to this new way of learning (Strand et al., 2003).



### **Mature Students, Family Commitments and Responsibilities**

From the perspective of this research, most offenders who may aspire to enter higher education are perceived to be classed as mature learners, over 21 years of age. Mature students entering higher education from non-traditional routes, as in not directly from school, is on the rise (Armstrong et al., 2014). This brings with it additional barriers to higher education linked to family commitments, children, caring for an older relative, potential health barriers and existing financial commitments to such items as the family, mortgages and debt (Gill et al., 2015). With the additional financial commitment required and the time commitment for participating in higher education, mature students can have more barriers to higher education than traditional entrants (Swain and Hammond, 2011). The growth in part-time study seems an obvious option for mature students to be able to juggle existing commitments. But with part time study taking longer, this may act as a barrier to some of the social and economic advantages of completing a higher education programme of study (Quaye and Harper, 2014).

### **The types of course on offer**

Changing demographics in higher education and the growth in lifelong learning has had an impact on the way mature learners, and even traditional HE learners, learn (Stephenson et al., 2013). Working part and full time during a higher education programme has become more commonplace, with an example seen work based learning (Stephenson et al., 2013), higher apprenticeships (Bentwood and Baker, 2013) and distance learning undergraduate and postgraduate programmes (Moore, 2013). As the programmes become more diverse, catering for demand, the student population becomes more diverse, encouraging widening participation and the further massification of higher education. Reflecting on these changes and how this supports the widening participation agenda, therefore the way in which higher education is delivered can be a barrier to accessing higher education.

From the perspective of our offenders, traditional routes to higher education may be seen as unachievable due to barriers, e.g. the offender may feel they need to work to have money. Part time, flexible, modular (with the potential to be transferred) and distance learning modes of learning then become potentially attractive to a group that have other barriers in life that may get in the way of full time traditional higher education (Strand et al., 2003). Harvey (2000) defines this type of student as a “second chance” learner and states that this group is becoming of strategic

importance to universities and therefore he forecasts a growth in this part of the higher education sector to cater for the growth in demand for a more non-traditional type of higher education, helping “second chance” learners overcome financial, geographic and social barriers to higher education through flexible programmes.

### **Financial barriers**

Student debt, due to the introduction and then increase in university tuition fees, students juggling a job to increase income and students accessing advice and guidance services to manage money and debt are key factors in managing perceived and real barriers to higher education (Saar et al., 2014). The debate around the factors of life long debt and the economic return on investment for the student and society have been contested (Harrison et al., 2015), with the jury out on the value of higher education v. life long debt and over 40% of student debt forecasted never being paid off due to time limits on student debt agreements (Crawford and Jin, 2014).

Barriers regarding finance can be seen in two categories. Firstly the day to day costs of affording to be in higher education. Initial loans, living costs and existing financial commitments can impact if adequate finance cannot be sourced. Affordability is therefore a major perceived barrier to higher education (Monevator, 2012). Secondly the level of student debt that is accumulated during an average university programme, is in itself a barrier to entry, as students may not perceive the potential lifelong earnings benefits to be worth the risk. This perception of risk varies between socio-economic groups, especially where students and their parents look at shorter-term financial matters related to further and higher education and employment (Callender and Jackson, 2008). The availability of money, or lack of it, then becomes an influencer that at times may trump the availability of academic progression.

### **HEI's Admissions Procedures**

Explored as part of the methodology of this research is the admission practices of HEI's and how these may be seen as a barrier for offenders accessing higher education (Alger, 1997, Greenberg, 2001). Generally admission procedures and practices of HEI's can be seen as a barrier to entry to universities, especially where offenders are required to declare their offences prior to being accepted on a university place. Inconstancies in HEI admission processes can also deter would be students as when comparing admissions procedures, students may become confused by the different approaches universities take (Kimmel, 2005). This is seen

more from disadvantaged groups where top flight universities, e.g. Russell Group, are less likely to be accepted due to a lack of understanding of the admissions processes of the top universities, especially when it comes to medicine and law (Bowl, 2001). This can also impact on the previous financial barriers to HE as those that tend to go to Russell Group universities tend to earn more throughout their lifetime (Chevalier and Conlon, 2003). The additional elements of admissions policies has been explored in the findings section of this thesis.

### **Special Educational Needs (SEN) and students with Disabilities**

Offenders are more likely to have a physical or mental health issue than the general public (Braithwaite et al., 2005, Steadman et al., 1982). SEN and students with other health issues and/or disabilities may perceive as being further from being able to access higher education due to equality of access issues (Fuller et al., 2004). These barriers can be complex and specific to the non-generalisable support needs of students, universities may find it difficult to support these students. Even if universities are able to support this group, the individual students themselves, their carers and families may worry, creating a barrier to accessing higher education. This fear of the unknown originating from students and their support network, is further intensified by inconsistencies and transparency in support mechanisms within HEI's, acting as a further barrier for entry (Jacklin et al., 2007).

### **Transition to university**

In addition to the barriers above, once students get to university, be that campus based or through various other routes, there are also potential barriers to accessing learning, even before they start studying. There are obvious matters linked to getting to know the university, how the course is structured, understanding what is expected of students, making new friends and discovering clubs and other social activities (Reay et al., 2010). For offenders, being part of a positive culture, one not linked to crime, is proven to reduce reoffending. Therefore this stage in the process of integrating the offender (now student) into the university way of life is key.

Additional challenges that non-traditional and traditional university students alike encounter can be seen through academic, personal and social challenges in addition to the barriers discussed above, but from a university student perspective.

### **2.5.2 How the Wolf Review impacts on the offender education theme**

Wolf recommends that all students should have a broad knowledge of subjects, not just a single vocational qualification. The need for Maths and English has been discussed as core to academic progression and should be promoted to A level standard, with GCSE A-C grade being a minimum requirement. The evolution of functional skills for adults negates this message, as the qualifications are not as rigorous in structure and assessment, with these qualifications being graded as a pass or fail, with no indication of grade. Although many universities recognise functional skills, these qualifications do not give prospective HE students the skills required to survive many degree programmes. Many offenders do not have Maths and English qualifications, so functional skills could be used as a starting point, with A levels being the preferred route to prepare adults for higher level progression. If offender learners are attracted towards low value vocational qualifications, it will offer little support in preparing them for higher education. Additionally, essential skills related to problem solving, communication skills, creativity and emotional maturity are key to preparing learners for academic progression.

This thesis strengthens the argument that offender learning should be more academic in nature to support progression. Support mechanisms should be in place to support non-traditional learners towards understanding the benefits of this attainment route and to mentor learners where learning does not come naturally. There is only really one way of doing this, based on Wolf's recommendations, and that is to focus the funding on training that adds value and to divert it from qualifications that do not.

Overall, for those who work in the education sector, the Wolf report tells us what we already know. What it has achieved is to openly publicise the need for reforming the use of low value vocational courses. These courses are used to provide the most needy with accredited learning, without any real tangible benefits related to the labour and academic markets. Although the report calls for reform, the lessons from the thesis have demonstrated that, the focus of this research, is possibly hindered by the accredited learning that is currently offered to most offenders. For an offender support system to be successful in aiding offenders to progress to HE, it will need to ensure that it promotes a minimum of GCSE Maths and English skills, along with other essential life skills that will prepare learners to survive once they gain access to HE. Getting to university is one big step. Succeeding takes a totally different set of

skills that will need to be supported throughout the HE learning journey for some offender beneficiaries.

Throughout this chapter there has been a discussion of changing attitudes towards vocational education throughout Europe and specifically in the UK. These changes have been seen through government intervention, the Sector Skills Councils' standardisation attempts and how funding has been distributed to the growing mix of vocational training providers. Further funding changes are on the horizon, but these changes seem to be focused primarily on pre 19 year old learners and may negate funding support for the up-skilling of older workers. This lack of funding may act as an additional barrier for offenders looking to use vocational training as a development tool to access employment or develop academically. Vocational training at lower levels does not prepare learners for higher education and since this is the area where funding is readily available, additional support structures will need to be identified to support the development of skills that are needed to survive in HE.

The implicit question here is how educators, those who support potential HE students and employers, can prepare learners for academic progression in a growing vocational world? This question is still unanswered here, but did influence the methodology phase of this research in recommending a support structure for offenders to access HE.

Whilst the relationship of vocational training to academic progression remains disjointed, there will continue to be a lack of focus on the importance of progression to higher levels of education. The shift in focus and stance, required to initiate change, needs to be led by the government, and subsequently changes made to funding policy. There seems little hope of this trend changing soon without pressure from government on the adult education industry in the form of either financial or legislative instruments.

Vocational training needs to become more academic to be able to support learners to gain the skills they need to be successful in HE. As this is not likely to happen in the near future, there needs to be a separate support mechanism to aid learners to access HE, especially for offenders who may have other barriers to learning beyond their ability to study. In the next chapter we explore potential models for sustainable organisations that could be established to support offenders

### **Chapter 3: Designing the Offender to U model**

Prison populations are increasing due to domestic judicial systems and high re-offending rates. One solution to alleviate the pressures on the prison system is community-based punishment, with embedded rehabilitation, life skills and education as mandatory elements. This approach of having mandatory elements for all instead of for the few is controversial, but has shown that it can reduce re-offending rates by over 10% (MacKenzie, 2001, Nacro, 2013). Integrating offenders back into society is particularly difficult in the first twelve months after conviction or release from prison (Justice, 2008a). There is a lack of coherent, consistent, evaluated educational provision in the community and most offenders lack basic Maths, English and employability skills, which is where the majority of resources of offender education providers are focused (Ross and Richards, 2003a, Pollock, 2004). Lower level basic literacy and numeracy are an important starting point, but offenders also need access to the best educational development that suits both their needs and the needs of industry and society at all levels, from further to higher education (Leitch, 2006). The models presented in this chapter are used to support the design of the research methodology, investigating a support framework using case studies, stakeholder analysis, interviews and analysis of current policies of organisations supporting offenders.

In order to have an effective system of community-based offender education and rehabilitation, there has to be participation across all areas of offender supervision (Mills, 2002). There needs to be an effective work programme in place that ensures that all the participants are playing their part and understand the needs of other stakeholders (Bush, 2003). A qualification is an important step for the offender when entering the world of work, as this allows the offender to feel “*equal*” to others (Mutter, 2008). Feeling equal and motivated is one of many steps towards realising one’s full potential as well as a systematic support network, which has sustainable funding, guiding offenders towards HE. This is the gap that will be explored through the remainder of the literature review.

#### **3.1 Introducing the Corporate University Model**

Not creating a corporate university or an offender university, but learning what is potentially required in an organisation that has training at the heart of an organisation. This is the aim of this section. At the heart of an Offender to U organisation will be its workers, some of which will be offenders, and offenders who may access services offered by the Offender to U organisation.

Wheeler (2005) suggests that many training organisations have changed their names to that of a corporate university, but are not doing anything substantially different. Wheeler argues that a true Corporate University (CU) has *“moved beyond training and education and into the daily challenge of getting results. It provides leadership in supporting people and process to achieve bottom-line success for the organization”*. As such, it is a multi-disciplinary view of learning as a key factor in an organisation being successful.

While Wheeler uses training departments as the basis for comparison, some other commentators take a traditional public university as the baseline for comparing the nature of the corporate university to the commonly held perception of a university (see Table 1). The differences are clear: historical development; ownership and aims as well as the practicalities of mode of delivery, educational level and contribution to knowledge generation.

The importance of ownership becomes clearer if the stakeholder interests of the traditional and corporate university models are compared (see Tables 2 and 3). These would be developed further for the model of the corporate body suggested in this research, Offenders to University, as there are more societal and governmental stakeholders than would be traditionally seen within a corporate university model (compare Tables 3 and 4).

	Public University Sector	Corporate University
Title	Originated from scholarly community development into corporations named Universitas.	Title conveys culture & community of learning developed in-house.
Historical Account	Medieval / classical roots. Development of old university sector 17th-19th century, new university sector 20th century, mass expansion.	Developed from in-house training and education departments; offering new services, creativity, research & development.
Aims	To provide liberal and/or professional education at a 'higher' level to the public.	To expand the knowledge base of their companies, adding to competitiveness, acting as catalyst for change.
Outcomes	Qualifications (degrees,	Raised horizons on what can be

	professional qualifications) & Research.	achieved; conveys the ethics, values & history of company.
Level of Education	Undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral.	Any from low level functional training to postgraduate study through partnerships.
Size & diversity of student body	Any member of the global public who fulfils the entry requirements.	Every employee in the organisation; some guarantee a minimum amount of training per year.
Knowledge generation	Mode 1 production of knowledge. Some mode 2 through industry partnership arrangements. Published for public consumption, peer reviewed.	Mode 2 production of knowledge. Research shared with partner organisations; in-house publication. Not publicly published.
Ownership & Control	'Owned' by the State in terms of funding. Reports publicly & is accountable to state organisations. 'Control' is loose due to concept of academic freedom.	Owned by the company; control varies according to the decentralised nature of in-house buying. Always has to be some business justification.
Links with public universities	Primarily, collaboration exists in research projects.	Links regarding delivery of accredited courses and some research.

**Table 1: Comparative analysis of the public and corporate models of universities** (Shaw, 2005, Blass, 2001)

Waks (2002) sees "the term corporate university being applied to three kinds of organisations: 1. Established, mainstream, non-profit universities adapting to economic and technological pressures by adopting managerial practices of modern for-profit corporations; 2. Newly established, highly innovative universities that operate as for-profit corporations, but satisfy the political and legal requirements for university status, and meet the standards of accrediting bodies (e.g. the University of Phoenix); and 3. New educational organisations operating within, and providing education and training services for, for-profit corporate firms (e.g. Marriott University"; Barclays degree programme in the UK).



### 3.2 The Values of Stakeholders

By comparing the nature and stakeholder analysis of traditional public universities and corporate universities, it is clear that they are quite different entities, sharing the university title and the focus on learning, but little more beyond that. By extending the stakeholder analysis to consider the parties with vested interests in the Offenders to U research, the range of stakeholders increases rather than decreases, although the nature of the support model itself is closer to that of the corporate model than the public university model. For this reason, the corporate university model is developed further here and adapted to meet the needs of the proposed Offenders to U framework.

The traditional public universities contribute to a range of different stakeholder values and draw a variety of funding sources. Primarily, funding comes through the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFC) and student loans for provision of degree courses to students. However, this is by no means the only source of funding, and there are expected to be significant funding cuts in the area of direct funding, with more emphasis placed on students funding their own education through self-funding and student loans. In some respects, the stakeholder interest table of the public university (Table 2) resembles that of the proposed Offenders to U framework Table 4) more closely than it does that of a more usual corporate university model (Table 3). This is because most corporate universities are owned by and run by corporate conglomerates for their employees only. Any greater good that is achieved for the community, society or government is through the actions of the individual employees in their own right outside of the workplace. Clearly, any public sector corporate universities need to reflect the fact that they are publicly owned, but they still operate primarily for the good of their organisation and employees.

Stakeholder Group	Input	Output
Central Government	Money	Services (chiefly graduates)
Employees	Labour, Time	Money
Industry/Employers/ Shareholders	Research contracts, sponsorship	Research findings, employees
Local Government	Money	Services

Professional Institutes	Advice, Money	Members, courses
Research Councils	Money	Research findings
Students	Money, Effort, Time	Education
Suppliers	Goods/Services	Money

**Table 2: Stakeholder Analysis for a Public University (Blass, 2001).**

Stakeholder Group	Input	Output
Central Government	None	Better educated labour force
Employees	Labour, Time	Money
Industry/Employers/ Shareholders	Investment	Profit (through increased output)
Local Government	None	None
Professional Institutes	None	None
Research Councils	None	None
Students	Effort, Time	Education, training
Suppliers (including public universities)	Goods/Services	Money

**Table 3: Stakeholder Analysis for a Corporate University (Blass, 2001).**

When examining the stakeholder analysis of a potential Offenders to U framework, it can be seen that an additional stakeholder, society, is identified, and the range of inputs and outputs broadens. This is because, to a degree, the proposed Offenders to U framework could be part funded in line with public funded education providers, but take the form and operational structure of a corporate university. From a stakeholder perspective, it can therefore be viewed as a hybrid concept.

Stakeholder Group	Input	Output
Central Government	Funding	Lower recidivism; lower crime rates
Employees	Labour, Time	Money
Industry/Employers/ Shareholders	Investment	Profit (through increased output)
Local Government	Funding	Lower recidivism, lower crime rates

Professional Institutes	None	None
Research Councils	None	None
Students/Offenders	Effort, Time	Education, training, qualifications, rehabilitation
Suppliers (including public universities)	Goods/Services	Money
Society	Purchase of Offenders to U goods and products	Lower crime rates; fewer victims of crime

**Table 4: Stakeholder Analysis for a potential Offenders to U Framework**

The various stakeholders are not merely providers of inputs and receivers of outputs. Their stake is more embedded in wider society with regard to the proposed Offenders to U framework than it might be with any other corporate university. This is because the impact of offenders dropping out and re-offending is greater than the dropout consequences for students from any other university or university preparation system.

The role of key stakeholders has been considered below with regard to the literature in the field.

**Central Government** - The cost of re-arresting offenders, convicting and re-sentencing to prison is greater than the cost of educating offenders to higher levels and imparting life skills and employability skills that could keep them from re-offending. Not counting the costs to society, it costs the government more than £65,000 to convict a criminal and then £35,000 per year to keep them in prison (Walker et al., 2009). Forgetting the immediate conviction costs and longer term costs to society, if the cost of keeping an offender in prison were to be re-invested at the rate of one year's prison costs per offender, the funding of the Offenders to U framework would be significant and sustainable and would offer the government a longer term return on investment.

**Employers** - Getting a job (investing in a pro-social institution and way of life) is generally thought to increase an offender's stake in conformity (Sampson and Laub,

1993). The formation of such conventional ties is regarded as *“the most important contingency that causes men to alter or terminate their criminal careers”* (Shover, 1996). Shover also noted that a job generated a *“routine pattern of activities... which conflicted with and left little time for the daily activities associated with crime”*. Other researchers note that secure employment helps to raise an offender’s self-esteem, provides him with a legitimate identity, more interaction with non-criminal peers and, in time, helps him establish personal life goals (Wallace, 1987). Supporting this argument, the proposal here is that HE will achieve the same outcomes. There are very few offenders who progress to HE and this level of attainment brings with it, desired levels of pride and self-esteem.

Although employment may have an inhibiting effect on future criminal behaviour, of itself, employment does not cause cessation of offending. What matters most is the quality of attachment and the extent of personal commitment that an individual offender has to his new job. Simply spending less time with criminal peers can clearly affect criminal activities. Transition from criminal involvement to conventional behaviour requires a type of “social transformation that entails the destruction of old relations or social networks and the creation of new ones” (Warr, 1998). Having a job, especially a good job, can also reduce the economic incentive for criminal behaviour. Having an academic goal linked to higher earning potential post graduation will probably have the same impact.

In terms of finding work, ex-offenders are thirteen times more likely to be unemployed than anyone else. They face many challenges in securing work. There are no available statistics on the levels of offenders that have failed to secure places at university due to their criminal convictions (this has been investigated as part of this research). Most of this group may have failed due to poor current attainment levels, more than their criminal past. Less than excellent qualifications would certainly stop them attending the top universities, but how would those universities deal with an application from an ex-offender who gained A Levels in prison? Further investigation is needed here to gain a clearer picture.

Traditionally, as a group, offenders suffer from low self-esteem; poor literacy and social skills; behavioural or mental health problems; live in poverty and debt; have insecure housing and lack any informal contacts for securing work (CIPD, 2004) outside those mandated to them or available on a voluntary basis. In terms of accessing support and guidance to access HE, the picture is bleaker for offenders,

as all that seems to be available are standard support mechanisms, which are not designed with offenders in mind. This is not intended as a criticism of these systems as why should FE and HE make exceptions for offenders? This should be the job of specific, well-meaning organisations with experience of supporting offenders.

**Offenders/potential students** – Offenders and ex-offenders are usually at risk of social exclusion once they are released from prison. Though there are various institutions that have been put in place to help offenders re-integrate, in general offenders perceive that they will never be accepted back into society. They believe they are still seen as criminals who are supposed to be punished, no matter what previous academic attainment or future potential attainment levels they may have. Whichever variables may be at play, what is very clear is that no offender can turn his / her life around without a genuine desire to do so (Maruna, 1997).

The theory that individuals cease to offend around the time they begin to form a significant personal attachment to a conventional other, also extends to the establishment of a secure attachment to the labour force or a personal investment in a pro-social institution (Sampson and Laub, 1993, Graham and Bowling, 1995).

**Society** - The cost of crime in the UK is significant. Excluding damage and repair to property or the impact on health of victims, the annual cost of crime in the UK is £11 billion per annum (CIPD, 2004). The average annual cost of a prison place is £35,000 yet it is deemed largely ineffective in reducing offending, with roughly two-thirds of offenders re-offending within two years of release. UK prisons are hugely overcrowded. When Labour came to power in 1997, concern was expressed over the size of the prison population, which by then had exceeded 40,000. It currently stands at just over 83,000, 70-80% of prisoners test positive for Class A drugs on entering prison. It is now acknowledged that treating such offenders for their habit in the community makes them far less likely to commit future offences. Specifically, offenders who receive residential drug treatment are 45% less likely to re-offend on return to the community than comparative offenders receiving prison sentences (Lyon, 2009). This is due to the integration of services, such as education, that support the offender towards a normal life. Clearly, finding alternatives to custody and interventions that target the diverse and complex needs of offenders is a much more positive solution than incarceration.

### **3.3 Corporate University Models in Action**

The corporate university's rationale has emerged as essentially that of “an animator and systematic change agent”. The “future viability of the corporate university style organisation will therefore depend on the ability of its managers to make a major contribution to the persistent renewal, quality and visibility of the firm's business-led intellectual capabilities relative to their competitors” (Dealtry, 2005). Dealtry argues that corporate universities underachieve if they try to mimic a business school or are simply a re-badged training department. He argues that they need to establish and build change networks.

Earlier models of the corporate university include that of Wild and Carnell (2000) who outline the characteristics of a corporate university as one that:

- “Demonstrates that an organisation takes investment in training and development seriously.
- Offers a range of training and development programmes to different roles and levels within a company.
- Offers the ability to gain qualifications at various levels of educational attainment.
- Has close tailoring of educational content to both strategic and immediate topical needs of a particular organisation.
- Encourages genuine partnerships between organisations and business schools, with the latter responsible for calling on wider expertise from beyond if needed.
- Features a range of delivery methods.
- Has the ability to deliver consistent strategic training and development for a single organisation across all its international units while also recognising local needs”.

The early models were difficult to differentiate from highly effective training departments. Thinking has moved on since then to differentiate the corporate university in terms of the role of knowledge rather than the education focus.

According to Wheeler (2005) a corporate university should therefore:

- Have a direct and acknowledged impact on the business performance of the organisation.

- Have a direct and acknowledged impact on individuals at the targeted level.
- Act as a hub for knowledge collection and dissemination.
- Integrate organisational development, change management, training, career and leadership development and knowledge management.
- Push individuals and the organisation into thinking and acting outside of established and familiar patterns of learning, whether in what they learn or how they learn.
- Have the ability to communicate knowledge and measure the impact of knowledge application.
- The development of value is a core feature of such a corporate university model.

In their model of a world-class, ideal type of corporate university, Prince and Beaver (2002) claim that the role should be one of providing *“a focus for the communication and facilitation of social, technological and organisational practices that support the organisation’s learning and knowledge creating processes”*. Hence, the key processes involved in the venture are around: knowledge systems; networks and partnerships; learning processes and people processes. This final process, in particular, highlights the importance of structure and Human Resources (HR) practices.

### **3.4 Strategic Intent and Organisational Structure**

While the core aims of the Offenders to U (O2U) framework would be to provide educational support, preparation to access HE and support during the degree studies for (ex)offenders, to help them rehabilitate and desist from further criminal activity, there are a number of strategic options that need to be considered.

Firstly, there is the question of the corporate nature of organisation behind the O2U framework. The corporate university model developed within corporate organisations to support and develop the organisation, can be identified as the ‘surrogate provider’. The surrogate provider of the O2U service would be almost the opposite of this, as it will be an organisation that supports and develops its temporary workers to progress onto working with other organisations. Those organisations, in turn, may require support from the surrogate provider of the O2U service to continue support with the offender clients. The surrogate provider therefore would develop its corporate university organisational structure to work with internal staff and beneficiaries, along

with supporting external organisations to continue the work in supporting offenders. The case study element of this research identified one employer who used revenue from painting and decorating to fund embedded support services for offenders, based locally, with ideas to franchise regionally and nationally. The question of whether this single business idea underpins the development of an O2U framework is obviously flawed, but did prompt further investigation in this research. The local/regional/national business structure will impact on the structure of the surrogate provider in terms of the degree of centralisation of control. If each hub operates its own business idea, then a more de-centralised, regional model will develop. If the whole provider is underpinned by the same business idea then a more centralised model may be appropriate. As the services seem to be segmented into funding generation and investing that funding into offender support services, it may be that funding generation methods vary, but that there is a standardised approach towards investment in people and support services.

There is also the question of how far the market for this type of business can expand before it is saturated and other business ideas need to be developed in order to sustain the corporate nature of the O2U provider. Again, whether such expansion into new business areas occurs regionally or nationally will impact on the degree of centralisation of the structure.

Third is the issue of accrediting, validating and awarding qualifications that the O2U provider may wish to offer. Any qualifications at Level 4 and above that carry public university certification will need to be awarded by a public university or organisation (such as BPP) which has degree awarding powers vested on it by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Whether one university accredits all the qualifications offered by the O2U provider or each region works with a regionally based university is another issue that needs to be resolved. If the O2U provider offers preparatory qualifications such as GCSEs, A levels and/or vocational qualifications, then they could seek accreditation directly with awarding bodies. Working with one provider solely will reduce costs and offer consistency throughout the O2U offering. However, the work-based nature of the assessment likely to be involved may benefit from more local providers being involved in the academic support elements of the O2U framework. This problem is not insurmountable, as one lead accrediting institution could subcontract to another that is more local, but this is an area that will need exploring further. Reflecting on this complex issue, it may seem easier and more credible to use local universities or national organisations to deliver the end to end



programmes, with the O2U provider supporting beneficiaries within the organisation, on their work placements or in full or part time HE study programmes. This is explored further through the methodology chapter.

Wheeler (2005) suggests that the centralised model is best suited when the number of providers working in the corporate university is small; the whole organisation has fewer than 2,000 employees; the charter is narrow and tightly defined and there is a need for rapid change. They suggest a decentralised model where profit centres are controlled independently within the corporate organisation; the organisation is a conglomerate; there is little in common between the divisions and the organisation is widely dispersed with different local needs. Finally, they recommend a federal model that combines a central group with disparate functions when the organisation is very large and dispersed with common needs; duplication of services or curriculums need merging and coordinating and the organisation needs a common core and local flexibility. They do also recognise that some organisations opt for a hybrid of the three depending on their needs.

The decision regarding the degree of centralisation may rest on the speed of development of the O2U provider itself. Jones (1995) argues that centralisation becomes a problem when top managers become overloaded and become so involved in the operational issues that they no longer have time for the strategic decision making about future organisational activities. Rollinson (2005) sees the degree of decentralisation depending more on the philosophy of the top management team and the degree of control they wish to maintain. Mullins (2007) notes that ownership affects degree of centralisation, with public sector companies tending to be more centralised in their structure than private sector organisations, as there is a greater demand for accountability of operations, regularity of procedures and uniformity of provision within the public sector. Wheelan & Hunger (2000) suggest that the difficulty in balancing the position on the centralisation-decentralisation continuum is reflected in the phrase *“think globally, act locally”*, i.e. the organisation’s aims are considered globally but the implementation is culturally adjusted to the local context.

### **3.5 Staffing the O2U provider: Bringing Together a Multi-Agency Workforce**

One of the key difficulties inhibiting offender rehabilitation is multi-agency working, which requires people from different job roles and employers to work together to

achieve a common aim. The concepts of inter-professional and multi-agency working are easy to comprehend but actually very difficult to facilitate. This is currently being evidenced through the very public reporting of failures in cases in social services resulting in children's deaths. However the issues are systemic rather than specific to any particular sector. The difficulties stem from the differing needs and agendas of each of the agencies involved, their respective responsibilities to society and the power differentials that exist within any team. Communication can be difficult as words have different meanings in different contexts/agencies, and hence a common language needs to be developed (Martinez and Abrams, 2013). With the current privatisation of probation services, this is a concern for beneficiaries of payment by results contractors, especially since HE is not mentioned in the new specification of probation support services. If one pays for an outcome, that is what one will get.

Isles-Buck and Newstead (2004) argue that professionals and the institutions they represent *"...may have to revise long held and cherished ideas and attitudes and they may have to move out of their "comfort zone" in order to begin new ways of working."*

Easton (2007) evaluated a persistent prolific offenders (PPO) rehabilitation scheme in four London boroughs and drew attention to the organisational problems that can arise when several agencies, each with their own working culture and organisational structure, are expected to work together towards a common goal. In interviewing key staff involved with PPO schemes in London, she identified a number of factors relating to multi-agency working that were inhibiting the success of PPO schemes. This included organisational differences, lack of resources and lack of strategic partnerships. A similar study, referenced in Jacobson et al (2006), concluded that there were many examples of close partnership working within schemes, but that there existed tensions in relation to certain agencies, and in particular, it had proved difficult to engage the Crown Prosecution Service, courts and prison services. More recently, this interagency tension included private service delivery partners, as they can be seen as potential sources of threat to privatisation (Wright, 2013). The key conclusions to emerge from the Jacobson et al study were that to work effectively, PPO schemes must:

- "Negotiate a clear sense of shared purpose between partners;
- Secure the commitment of senior managers;
- Establish clear criteria for selecting and de-selecting PPOs; and

- Ensure that targets put in place by performance management systems do not have the effect of subverting the schemes' aims" (LCJB, 2010).

Inter-professional education aims to remove negative stereotypes held by professions about one another. Skills thought to be required of inter-professional teams are group process, communication, resource management, team analysis and problem solving, networking, managing confidentiality, forming cooperative relationships, negotiating, and handling conflict (Barr, 1996, Floyd and Morrison, 2013). In essence, the multi-agency professionals need to operate as a community of practice, defined by Nagy and Burch (2009). In academic communities as a voluntary workplace, engagement "with the potential to harness the multiplier effects of collaborative processes by building on informal networks within entities exists". They see the community as an opportunity to build knowledge through negotiating identity and through learning and they value purpose in collaboration.

While many of the professionals who work with offenders need not necessarily have any real interaction with the O2U provider, it would offer an opportunity for engaging the various agencies and stakeholders in a common venture. By having a clear mandate, strategy, and modus operandi, the O2U model could act as a facilitating mechanism for improving inter-professional working, as well as offering a model for inter-professional learning interacting with mainstream university infrastructures. Therefore, as well as offering education to offenders and supporting offenders to become ready to access and complete HE, the process of contributing to the O2U provider itself could engage the various professional agencies and stakeholders in learning themselves. Andresen (2007) recognises this process as an active engagement in diversity learning, by making use of staff differences in learning opportunities, as knowledge is more prone to change than other factors underpinning diversity, due to its roots in experience, attitudes, ways of thinking and know-how. Rather than assimilating or equalising difference, difference is used to actively integrate and preserve diversity, in order to create a multifaceted knowledge base through collective learning processes.

The principle behind the O2U model is that the offenders are engaged in a small business venture, through which they gain support to be ready and capable of accessing HE and to gain work-based and/or academic qualifications. The business and the educational support elements therefore operate hand-in-hand in a manner that essentially embeds the business in the O2U model, rather than the other way

round. Staffing of the O2U provider is therefore crucial, as the staff will need to combine both business competence as well as having expertise in teaching, learning and advice and guidance.

Arguably, the O2U model delivered will operate through a process of action learning. Pedlar and Burgoyne (2008) view action learning as part of a wider family of action-based approaches to research and learning, *“distinguished by the primacy it accords to action and learning by the people actually facing the problems in question, and also for its scepticism on the views and advice of experts”*. Hence it is the learning of the offenders themselves that is at the heart of the model rather than the *“experts”* who are running the O2U provider. This suggests that the role of the staff within the O2U provider is more one of *“expert facilitator”* than teacher.

### **3.6 Performance Analysis and Measurement**

Each stakeholder group is likely to have its own ideas and preferences with regards to what will constitute successful performance at O2U. These may need to be negotiated individually with the stakeholders when contracting with them. In this chapter, more generic approaches to performance, analysis and measurement are explored without going into the detail of specific stakeholder requirements. This could be carried out as part of a feasibility study and business planning process, which is likely to be the next stage in research following this initial research.

Overcast et al (2009), suggest an appreciative inquiry approach to evaluation, to engage learning faculties in the design of measurement strategies and processes. Ryan (2006) proposes a qualitative approach, which establishes expectations and then measures how these are met. The development of the analysis and measurement system for O2U is likely to require a combination of both, at different points in time as the O2U provider establishes itself, sets benchmarks and then looks to improve on these on a continuous basis. Todd (2008) recognises that measurement science at corporate universities is still evolving and suggests that measures are borrowed from financiers and investors, while Maize & McCool (2007) focus on customers and markets, suggesting the use of a competency framework to underpin performance plans.

There are at least three different areas of the O2U framework that can be monitored with regard to performance, in order to ascertain whether or not any funding source is obtaining a suitable return on investment:

1. The ex-offenders
2. Offenders to University as a learning organisation
3. Offenders to University as a business organisation

It is important that the learning operations of the O2U provider are measured as separate business operations, as it would be possible for one to succeed and the other to fail. In reality, it may be that one part of the business supports the other, or that, as the business matures, one part of the business becomes less dominant or closes. For example, the current business support activity in one of the case study organisations, the Bounce Back Foundation, is where its main revenue is from painting and decorating, with fundraising as a secondary activity. Both funding streams are used to fund support for offenders.

Depending on the revenue generation activity, the activity may not be appropriate in all areas of the country and may have a maximum capacity in order to be sustainable. Therefore alternative business initiatives may be required. These may or may not be profitable in their own right. They may, for example, result in a social and public good, rather than a monetary profit. This would mean that the business model supporting the O2U model would not meet the performance criteria of being a sustainable business in its own right. It would, however, meet the requirement of providing the necessary experience to gain the qualifications needed for the ex-offenders to rehabilitate into the mainstream workforce or access HE. Hence, success against performance criteria 2 would be achieved, but not against performance criteria 3.

What follows is an examination of each of these three performance areas in turn, to explore potential performance measures, their appropriateness and application to the O2U framework and their fitness for purpose for this model.

### **3.7 Measuring performance: the ex-offenders**

The most common framework applied to learning and development activities is Kirkpatrick's (2006) four levels of training evaluation. The first level measures the

reaction to the training; the second the learning; the third looks at any change in behaviour and the fourth is the return on investment. Reaction to training, the first level, is largely measured through evaluation sheets, or “*happy sheets*” which ensure that the students/participants have enjoyed their learning experience. To a degree, this is not the most relevant measure in this case. It is not a question of whether the ex-offenders are having a good time, it is a question of whether they are making the necessary adjustments to rehabilitate into mainstream society, although enjoyment may impact on factors such as retention, progression and re-offending rates. As such, reaction in this situation may be better measured by retention numbers, completion rates, success rates and progression to HE. This could be paired with some form of reflective evaluation after the O2U process has been completed, rather than taking reactive measures at the point of delivery.

The second level and third level are largely merged in a work-based learning model as the second level is concerned with measuring learning and the third with whether that learning then results in a change in behaviour. When engaged in work-based learning, the two occur simultaneously and are thus difficult to separate. One measure of success in this area would be the attainment of the qualification and hence, completion rates may be important, but equally non-completion where someone has got a job or accessed HE earlier than anticipated, which would also be considered a success.

The final level is return on investment. This would involve some form of cost benefit analysis looking at the financial implication of operating the O2U organisation against the opportunity costs of not doing so (i.e. the costs associated with re-offending and further incarceration).

Adopting an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) approach (Friedman, 2005), the question becomes not one of what can be measured easily, or fitting a model of evaluation, but rather a question of what is the outcome that one wants to achieve and how will that be evidenced? The “aim is to distinguish between quantity and quality, and between inputs, outputs and outcomes or results” (Pugh, 2009). The outcome on this occasion is the ex-offenders changing their lifestyles such that they desist from offending, progress to HE, join the mainstream workforce and contribute fully to society as other non-offending citizens. As such, the evidence that would measure success would be the number of ex-offenders who desist from offending; the number of ex-offenders entering HE; the number of ex-offenders who find

suitable employment and the number of ex-offenders sustaining a lifestyle within mainstream society, which involves no criminal elements.

### **3.8 Measuring performance: O2U as a learning organisation**

This measure looks at the O2U as an institution that is operating a model of training for business success, rather than training for the sake of training. This would apply equally to their internal staff as it would be the ex-offender clients they are providing education for and, in some cases, the ex-offender clients would also be the staff. Measures of performance success here would therefore need to link clearly to business needs and measures of effectiveness and efficiency.

Evidence in this category would not necessarily be restricted to what goes on at the learning interface with the students, but also informal learning that occurs within the staff teams, mentoring of co-workers, on-the-job learning and reflective learning leading to continuous improvement and development. Adopting the OBA approach would look for outcomes associated with organisational learning. Pugh (2009) suggests seven questions which may be appropriate in identifying outcomes:

1. "Who are our users?
  2. How can we measure if our users are better off?
  3. How can we measure if we are delivering services well?
  4. How are we doing on the most important of these measures?
  5. Who are the partners that have a role to play in doing better?
  6. What works to do better, including no-cost and low-cost ideas?
  7. What do we propose to do?" (Tomlinson, 2013) (Tomlinson, 2013)
- (Tomlinson, 2013) (Tomlinson, 2013) (Tomlinson, 2013) (Tomlinson, 2013)  
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By answering these questions the organisation would engage in double-loop learning (Argyris, 1992), challenging some of the assumptions underpinning their modus operandi and seeking alternative ways of operating in the future.

### **3.9 Measuring performance: Offenders to University as a business organisation**

This is the obvious place for the measure of return on investment outlined in Level 4 of Kirkpatrick's (2006) model, where the financial implications of the investment in the O2U are balanced against the financial returns of the business model, that is both derived from and supports the O2U's work-based activities. From an OBA approach, the output of the business activity is incidental to the outcome that the O2U is trying to achieve, and hence less weight would be placed on this measure of performance than would be under Kirkpatrick's model.

### **3.10 Funding the O2U organisation: considering alternative models**

There are two obvious sources of funding for the O2U. Firstly, it could be publicly funded, drawing on the savings to the criminal justice system's annual expenditure achieved through rehabilitating offenders, rather than re-incarcerating them. In addition, a further, probably more accessible, public funding source would be government funding from delivering accredited training and advice and guidance to the ex-offender beneficiaries, in preparation to access HE. Secondly, the O2U could be self-funded through the business that is generated by work efforts of the ex-offenders, paid employees and/or volunteers. Most likely, the model will be some combination of both, requiring some form of initial start-up investment to establish the O2U, supported by some form of per-student funding for the ex-offenders' training. This, in turn, could be supported by the profits of the business opportunity that the ex-offenders engage in while undertaking their training.

The O2U concept is intended to be neither a for-profit organisation, nor a hugely successful business in its own right. If ex-offenders manage to establish successful businesses, which they then run themselves as a means of generating continued self-employment, as well as employment opportunities for other ex-offenders, then the model will be achieving its aims in educating and rehabilitating offenders.

Matsuzuka (2008) suggests that sustainability within corporate university models is dependent on the business capacity of the sponsoring organisations. This puts pressure on the business model behind the corporate university being successful in its own right.



The public funding model could be managed in two different ways: a corporate allocation model, or a cost recovery model. The first model operates by the expenses incurred by the operation of the O2U being allocated to a regional division that physically educates those offenders, with a small proportion being taken out of this to cover central costs and overheads. Essentially, this means that the local providers are responsible for the management of their budgets and costs. The second model is one whereby the funding is allocated to the central business and they allocate the funds to the local providers/regions as and when they recruit ex-offenders on to their programmes. This latter model seems more attractive, at least initially, until the model has been expanded and the provider is established and in a position to continue and expand their business operation as a semi-autonomous unit. This would coincide with any shift from centralised governance and management to decentralisation as outlined in the previous chapter.

With regard to drawing down public funding, some initial investment would need to be made, as a lump-sum investment, to cover the start-up costs of the expansion from a pilot project to a viable business venture. This would need to cover the salary and expenses of the team involved in establishing the regional networks, developing the model to be replicated, and developing the partnership with the awarding body that would validate the qualifications being offered. On-going public funding would be required to support the ex-offenders in the provision of their studies. As the qualifications will mainly be work-based, there will be some return on effort for the students' work and hence the level of funding per student is anticipated to be less than that provided for a full-time FE or HE student.

### **3.11 Methodology for Business Development**

Explored in the literature review and in the research elements of the thesis is the overarching concept that government is not, and probably wont, support offenders to progress and succeed to higher education. The purpose of exploring potential business models is to gain an insight into how might an organisation structure itself to be sustainable, whilst supporting philanthropic outcomes as described throughout this document. The realisation that there is not enough funding to go around to support the masses is a harsh reality of the UK's post recession economy. In a more-for-less culture, those offenders in the minority, as seen in this study, will be left to fend for themselves, unless they are supported.

Before progressing to the methodology chapter, it is worth noting that, in order to progress the concept of the O2U model to the point of market testing, a number of activities will need to take place:

1. Business planning research
2. A feasibility study
3. Stakeholder analysis (this will form the majority of the research part of this thesis)
4. An exploration of ownership and governance issues

Each of these is considered in turn below, before progressing onto an in-depth discussion on the topic of Stakeholder Analysis, which is at the heart of this research.

### **3.12 Business Planning Research**

This will involve a thorough investigation of the financial requirements of the business and a cash flow model for at least the first 12 months, preferably 24 months. This will illustrate the flow of money in and out of the company over the first year/two years.

Regarding the investment, estimates will need to be obtained for establishing the O2U network; establishing the businesses that will generate revenue to support the regional operations of the O2U provider; the on-going running costs that will be involved in terms of rental of buildings and infrastructure; employee salaries and on-costs; overheads; leasing of equipment and transport and other operating costs.

It will be important to differentiate in the business plan between sunk costs associated with the start-up of the O2U provider and the on-going running costs, as alternative sources of funding may be accessible for each. Sources of funding will also need to be explored to ensure that there are adequate funding opportunities available to meet the costs of the project. These could include charitable foundations as well as government contracts and criminal justice funding sources. The case studies on potential funding models could be used as example models to identify areas of cost and sources of funding.

The business activities which will sustain the training opportunities for O2U activities, i.e. the trade businesses/fund raising, will also need to have business plans drawn up, taking account of their operational costs and income opportunities and sources. It is possible that these business developments may become self-funding in time as

they reach a level of throughput that generates enough income to cover their running costs. There will, however, probably be sunk costs in establishing them.

Separate cash flow forecasts and business plans should be generated for the business operations and the O2U operations. Given the social enterprise nature of the painting and decorating business cited as an example, it is unlikely that the business operations, any further education and advice and guidance activities will fund the O2U activities. The output of the business planning research should therefore be a variety of costing models, cash flow projections and balance sheet projections, based on differing financial and costing assumptions.

### **3.13 Feasibility Study**

Once the business planning research has been undertaken, a form of market research needs to be undertaken to test the feasibility of the model. This will involve testing the business idea and draft model with investors, customers, offenders, agencies involved in supporting the model, accrediting bodies and so forth. This differs from the stakeholder analysis as it is focussing on market testing the model to ensure that it would work for the various parties involved, rather than looking at the various parties' needs. It could be carried out in conjunction with the stakeholder analysis but the output differs. The output of a feasibility study should be a report that identifies the activities that need to take place in order for the model to be put into operation, any potential barriers or risks that arise and suggestions for solutions to overcome these problems or to minimise the risks.

### **3.14 Stakeholder Analysis**

A range of potential stakeholders were identified in the literature review chapter, and a full stakeholder analysis was carried out to inform the development of the O2U model.

These stakeholders included:

- Probation Services
- Prisons
- Offender education providers
- Universities
- Charities that support offenders to access universities.

This is fully explored in the Methodology chapter.

### **3.15 Exploration of Governance and Ownership Issues**

There are a number of options for the ownership and governance of the proposed O2U provider. These are considered here from a legal perspective and with regard to any legal formation required in order to be able to draw down certain elements of funding as well as to reflect the social enterprise nature of the O2U model.

1. Charity/Trust – the O2U provider could be established as a charitable organisation or an organisation governed by a trust fund for the purpose of benefitting the ex-offenders. Any profits made from the work, which supports the education, would then be distributed to the ex-offenders for whom the organisation is being established.
2. Private Limited Company – the organisation could be established as a private limited company with shareholders, probably drawn from the team who have conceptualised and operationalised the idea. The company would then need to apply for public funds to support it in an open tendering process, as would any other organisation.
3. Public Corporation – the O2U organisation could be set up as a public corporation situated within a government department, for example, the Ministry of Justice. It would then be funded through Ministry funds and accountable to the Ministry for any expenditure and profit.
4. Worker co-operative – the O2U organisation would become owned by all those who work within it. This would encourage the faculty and professionals working on the project to engage in the operations and future running of the university, as it would give them a direct stake. This is a shared ownership mechanism, which is not particularly common in the UK but is more common in Europe.
5. Subsidiary of another organisation – it is possible that another organisation, such as a public university, might want to support an O2U project as a wholly-owned or part-owned subsidiary of its main activities. This would reduce the risk for the innovators of the O2U and offer some form of security. It would also provide a guaranteed validation body for any qualifications being developed, if the model progressed to an education model from one of support for accessing HE.

Any decision regarding ownership and governance would need to be considered in the context of the business plan in terms of profit/loss potential as well as the stakeholder analysis. In terms of developing a final business plan to take to market, the decision around ownership and governance would need to be made first as this would underpin bringing the concept to market. However, ownership and governance would also need to be reviewed again at the end of the process as they may be dependent on, or affected by, the findings from the other three explorations.

### **3.16 Business Development Plan**

Completing the four activities above (Business planning research; A feasibility study; Stakeholder analysis; An exploration of ownership and governance issues) would provide the information required for a definitive business development plan to be developed to take the selected model of O2U to market. This should be a document outlining the selected model with a clear justification for the costings presented; setting out the proposed form of governance and detailing the stakeholder analysis and performance measures.

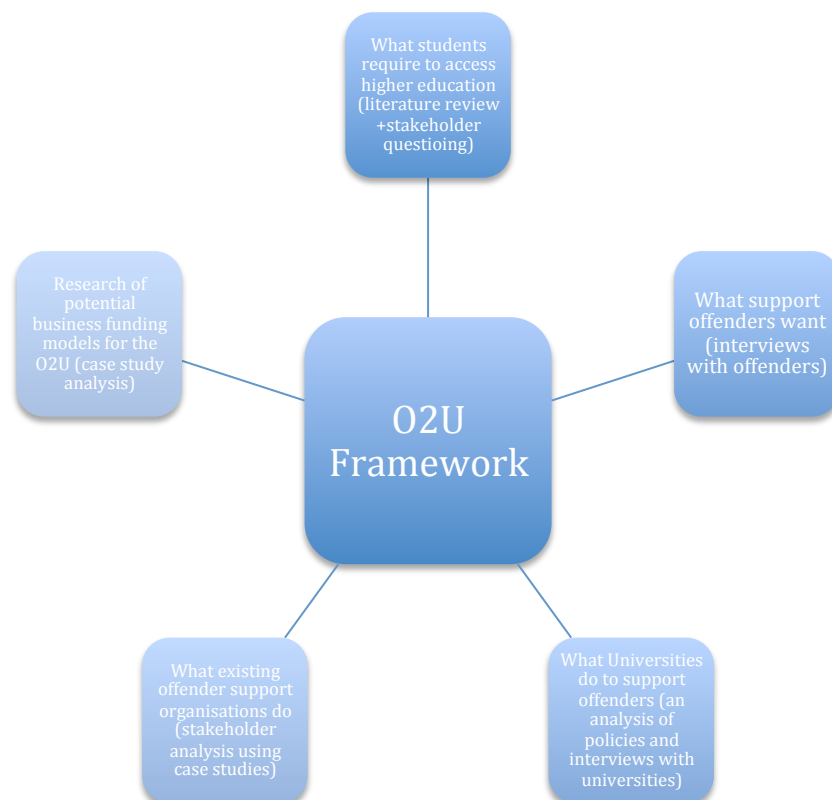
For the purposes of this research, the focus has been placed on stakeholder analysis, supporting a full understanding of what type of service is required, best practice and potential business models for funding the O2U.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter presents the case for the development of a corporate university style model to support the mentoring and educational development of community based offenders, to enable them to be able to progress to and complete degree level studies. The overall aim of this is to help raise employability skills and support progression within and to HE.

The corporate university model will be explored with regard to its formation, stakeholders, operation and contribution, through a detailed literature review and stakeholder analysis.

An investigation was completed examining: 1) What students require to access higher education (literature review); 2) What support offenders want (interviews with offenders); 3) What universities do to support offenders (an analysis of policies and interviews with universities), 4) What existing offender support organisations do (stakeholder analysis using case studies) and 5) Research of potential business funding models for the O2U (case study analysis).



**Figure 2: O2U Framework Research Design**

The central research question that this thesis aims to answer is: How do you design a community based offender education model that incorporates support to access Higher Education? Based on this there are key areas that were explored. (1) To understand what current offender education offers through an analysis of the Leitch Report from an offender perspective. (2) To analyse how well the current curriculum offered to offenders prepares them for HE. (3) To understand corporate university models and identify a model that can be modified to the needs of the proposed O2U organisation. (4) To understand the needs of offenders in relation to how they might access HE successfully and (5) To analyse stakeholder opinions, which will influence the recommended design of the O2U model. A summary of research to investigate these themes can be found in tables 5 and 6.

		Interviews			Secondary Data Source	
Research Stage	Method of Inquiry	Type of Interview	Size of Sample	Analysis Method	No of Sources	Analysis Method
1) What students require to access higher education	Literature Review	N/A	N/A	N/A		Author
2) What support offenders want	Community Offender Education Attainment Survey	Questionnaire	397	Excel	N/A	N/A
	Interviews with offenders	Focus Group	4 groups (total 24 offenders)	Researcher Analysis	N/A	N/A
3) What universities do to support offenders	Analysis of University policies regarding general admissions and offender admissions	N/A	N/A	N/A	40 admission policies	Nvivo and Wordle
	Analysis of University admissions data for offenders (voluntary and via Freedom of Information requests)	N/A	N/A	N/A	38 sets of data	Excel
	Interviews with universities admissions and/or widening participation staff	Semi Structured (1 face to face, 2 telephone)	3 University Managers	Case Study	N/A	N/A

**Table 5: Summary of research completed (part one)**



		Interviews			Secondary Data Source	
Research Stage	Method of Inquiry	Type of Interview	Size of Sample	Analysis Method	No of Sources	Analysis Method
4) What existing offender support organisations do (Stakeholder analysis using case studies)	Analysis of charities and Social enterprise business policies	N/A	N/A	N/A	Analysis of 8 charity commission business documents	Case Study
	Interviews with front line staff and/or senior managers at offender support charities / social enterprises	Telephone interview	5	Case Study	N/A	N/A
	Stakeholder Interviews	Semi Structured interview (group and individual)	7	Case Study	N/A	N/A
5) Research of potential business funding models for the O2U (case study analysis).	Analysis of charities and Social enterprise business policies	N/A	N/A	N/A	8 charity commission business documents	Case Study
	Interviews with front line staff and/or senior managers	Telephone interview	5	Case Study	N/A	N/A

**Table 6: Summary of research completed (part two)**

Gaining an understanding of the changes that stakeholders, including offenders, need, want and aspire to, by hearing their perceptions and stories and analysing questionnaire data was a concern in designing this research project. As a practitioner, I have a narrow set of information gained from working in offender education and supervision in both prisons and in community based offender environments. There is also a great deal written on the subject, but this focuses primarily on prisons, high risk offenders, youth offenders and lower level basic and vocational skills. The gap in the current literature can be found in community based offender education and regarding offenders accessing HE. It is this gap in knowledge that inspired this research.

The data collection phases of this research are of utmost importance to accessing an insight into how the spectrum of commentators, spectators and participants in the offender journey towards and in higher education. Dawson (2000) discusses five ways of adding value to information that are essential in making sense of complex situations such as offender education which seems to be full of hearsay, rumour and conjecture where it come to offenders being supported to HE. This lack of current tangible data is due to the lack of formal process, policy and procedure in this area of offender education. Dawson goes on to discuss the value of collecting data, which is linked to the aims of this research methodology aimed at understanding the true picture of HE for offenders. 1) Filtering: separating signal from noise, based on some criteria. 2) Validation: ensuring that information is reliable, current or supported by research. 3) Synthesis: describing patterns, trends or flows in large amounts of information. 4) Presentation: making information understandable through visualization or logical presentation. 5) Customisation: describing information in context. Without the data collection aspect of this research, the research would have little value as it would be analysing limited available data from potentially bias sources and policies that are designed to support lower levels of education. Both of these sources of data were deemed as insufficient and justified the complexity of data collection described in this chapter.

The research journey started with gaining an understanding of the levels of academic attainment of community based offenders. This was to test if there was a need for a service that promotes HE. Firstly local, regional and national probation support agencies were approached for data. Three local managers from probation services were approached. They did not record the data in a system that could be analysed. On a national level, the National Offender Management Service was approached via

their research department. They did not have any live data, only an example from a small-scale research project. At this stage the decision was taken to carry out research directly with offenders on probation. With the permission of Bedfordshire and Norfolk probation services, a questionnaire was designed to capture the prior attainment levels of all offenders on community-based orders. The survey was administered by a trained advice and guidance worker from the probation service and later validated through sampled questioning with the offenders to check the responses of the sample. Those offenders who stated they had previously achieved Level 3 or above, were asked to complete a Maths and English skills assessment. The assessment chosen is commonly used in the FE and HE sectors to help identify level and areas of development in Maths and English. The BKSB (2014) assessment was administered via an online portal, where access was supervised under exam conditions to support validity of the results. It was felt that this was a required step to help to validate the declared academic attainment levels of the sample who appeared to be at the top end of the attainment spectrum and would be presumed able to progress to university. Offenders were sampled between March 2011 and July 2012. As responses were based on the offenders' responses, further validation was required. Through questioning processes and asking to see certificates, further validity was gained.

This process helped me to build a picture of the current situation. I aimed to build a more complex picture, "*understanding the meaning individuals and groups ascribe to a social human problem*" (Creswell, 2009). I wanted to know what people think who are directly involved with offender education, training and employability (ETE) support and supervision. I wished to explore what has to happen to improve the service that offenders receive to aid the attainment of skills leading to sustainable employment, higher levels of education being one of the key areas of focus.

On a commercial perspective, I also wanted to understand, from both probation service and education funding body perspectives, what a new model could offer, in the way of added value and how this model could be designed to boost success in areas where the probation service is already measured. From a practitioner's perspective, and based on experience, this seemed common sense, as probation services have targets and, where there are targets, there should be data. This data could then be used to help evaluate the success of a model after implementation.

In the literature review, the corporate university as a model was explored, with a secondary focus on offenders accessing enhanced support to access HE and offender rehabilitation through education and training. This was done in line with the vision that a sustainable offender focused organisation should be in part run by offenders and profits should be channelled to support offenders. There are a number of crosscutting themes that one could investigate that are covered well in the currently available literature. The areas of widening participation and human capital were touched upon whilst looking at the value of the current lower level focus of offender education and how this may prepare offenders for HE.

The central hypothesis, regarding potential models working with probation services, is that the relationship between education, training, employability and the history, targets and political pressures on the probation services are not a linear or a cause-and-effect one, but an interdependent relationship. Understanding what is needed to help offenders rehabilitate through skills development seemed to be the easy part of this research. However, with limited data from probation services, this became a mini research project in itself carried out before progressing onto the main focus of the study. Understanding stakeholders' needs and perceptions enabled a potentially successful model to be developed, tested through the interviews and case study analysis.

## **4.1 Choosing the Methodology**

### **4.1.1 Literature search**

The literature review that was used to co-construct the O2U model was multidisciplinary, as the subject is one that touches upon many fields of study such as general education, vocational education, HE, offender rehabilitation and public policy. The literature review covered the main contributors to the field and was an examination of their opinions and perceptions. The design brought together a host of cross discipline current knowledge. It highlighted important issues in the research on offender education using a corporate university framework to design a hopefully sustainable model. Definitions were investigated and theoretical frameworks and empirical findings in literatures across disciplines were linked to the overall aim of designing the O2U model. Then an analysis of positive similarities was carried out and those elements that were not considered valuable to the model were discounted. After this what remained were definitions, frameworks and empirical findings that were used to identify variables that influence the multidisciplinary topics central to the

research question. The terms used were variables to quantify where *“one or more groups receive the experimental manipulation, or treatment, from the researcher”* (Creswell, 2009). Below is a description of the methodology that was used for identifying, prioritising and categorising these variables.

#### **4.1.2 Criteria for relevance**

Literature from many disciplines was reviewed and included or rejected based on its significance to the research question. Firstly, the study investigated offender education using the Leitch report as a guide (Leitch, 2006). This was considered to be relevant as it was a major insight into general education in the UK. Later commentators on this subject field have also been cited to enable comment on the progression towards Leitch’s aspirational goals. This revealed variables found in areas of education linked to the economic and social benefits of accessing education and HE.

As part of this research is regarding the preparation of offenders for HE, there was an in-depth analysis of how well the current curriculum prepares offenders for academic studies. This curriculum is currently focused on vocational skills and basic skills attainment at pre-GCSE levels. Therefore, it was relevant to examine vocational training, its history and how well it prepares adult learners for HE. As many learners progress towards HE in later life, it was felt appropriate to look at how vocational training increases work based efficiency, as this may be an influential factor on sustainable employment and future progression to HE, either as part of professional development in the workplace or as a standalone educational trajectory.

The final stage of the literature review looked at a corporate university framework put forward by Wheeler (2005), considering this in relation to the proposed focus on offender HE. This framework also helped in the design of the research, using case studies of existing projects and stakeholder analysis. All types of studies were classed as relevant including quantitative and qualitative studies.

#### **4.1.3 Search terms and databases**

The initial literature search used Business Source Premier, Emerald Full Text, Web of Science and Google Scholar. All are electronic academic search engines that search through electronic journals or databases. These databases are interdisciplinary, but have the capability of finding specific discipline linked topics for

this research. Search results were not limited to materials available online. Various additional sources were investigated within the research, following on from the online search findings.

These included:

*“relevant materials and will probably comprise a range of media: books (monographs, text books, reference books); articles from journals, whether print or electronic (making sure the electronic journals have been through a peer review process); newspaper articles; historical records; commercial reports and statistical information; government reports and statistical information; theses and dissertations and other types of information which may become relevant from researching a particular discipline”*  
(Emerald, 2010).

Disciplines covered were split into six distinct strands with a crosscutting theme related to nine questions linked to conducting ethical research when engaging with vulnerable groups, such as offenders.

1. General themes linked to widening participation were mixed into specific search criteria including: widening participation, progression from FE to HE , social networks, Higher Education, integrated learning, collaborative learning, team learning, pedagogy, university retention/dropout, adult students, adult education and socio-economic groups
2. Offender education and rehabilitation search terms included: labour supply, prison, imprisonment, ex-convicts, ex-offenders, female offenders, male offenders, rehabilitation of offenders, crime, punishment, community sentencing and community payback
3. Corporate university framework included: academic industry collaboration, in-house services business, employees, corporate training, return on investment and employer support of education,
4. Geographic and date search terms were not restricted
5. Research method search terms included: Qualitative research, Quantitative research, case study and stakeholder analysis.

Once the literature sources had been identified, these references were loaded into Endnote reference manager for ease of access and to remove any duplicates. The

next stage in this process was to identify references found in books or sections in books. Analysis of the references and bibliographies of relevant articles, looking for books and chapters of books, was completed in conjunction with Google Scholar and looking at those publishers' websites' who publish in these areas. Publishers' websites were identified by using Google to search for "*book publishers*" and the above discipline strands. After the initial selection of the materials there were two stages that the evaluation followed, first an initial appraisal followed by a content analysis.

#### **4.1.4 The analysis of the literature**

The first stage of the literature analysis was summarising the literature and the unique variables that may influence the O2U model design and stakeholder analysis. For ease of access to detailed information, a summary of the available systematic reviews of literature was recorded, before moving onto other sources identified. This data was summarised into the following range of topics: source, date of publication, context, author(s), outcomes and number of citations. In summarising the literature, before writing it up, I will use verbatim quotes to ensure accurate interpretation of them at a later date.

Following Creswell's (2009) recommendations, the variables were divided into three categories: independent variables, dependent variables and control variable. This method was used in a similar study by Gurin et al (2002) looking at diversity in HE and how this impacts on outcomes. Berg (2009) describes variables as a "*system of logical statements or propositions that explain the relationship between two or more objects, concepts, phenomena, or characteristics of humans*". He goes on to explain Hagan's (2006) offender focused definition of a theory derived from variables which may also be an attempt "*to develop explanations about reality or ways to classify and organize events, describe events, or even predict future events*".

The primary focus of this research was to build a model based on a case study of existing offender education projects (control variable); theories gained from the literature (dependent variables); through stakeholder analysis, interviews and policy analysis (independent variables) and to develop a model that has a good probability of being viable and accepted by the offender support community. In creating a final model derived from the corporate university concept of Wheeler (2005) and adapted through stakeholder analysis, the measurement of variables and collection of data

was vital in testing presumed relationships. The research compared the different values of the dependent variable (e.g. the developing concept of a community based offender education model) and the attempts to develop the model over time and it draws conclusions.

The approach to attract stakeholders was to invite interested parties to help further develop an already recognised best practice project, using a case study and the initial offender attainment level data as a starting point to be developed. Throughout the life of the research phase there was the need to continually update the participant stakeholders. There was a need to ensure that case studies were updated in line with best practice in case study theory, or risk reputation, validity and impact. These practices also aided the validation of the stakeholder analysis. Therefore, later in this document I have outlined on-going validation using methods originating from Yin's (2009) recommendations.

Emphasis was placed on emerging themes that cross discipline borders. This acted as a catalyst in the process of constructing new theory and taking advantage of the other high quality research in related fields. This category is called the 'output' category and contains those variables that are created by superimposing non-related disciplines into the field of offender education. Finally, there was the constraint of time to analyse the literature, initially set at three months, but ultimately completed over an 18 month period due to the length of time taken on the research.

#### **4.1.5 Theoretical Underpinnings**

The first challenge here was to find out how to collect appropriate information to add to my understanding of the perceptions, processes and mechanisms of stakeholder operations, and to decide whether quantitative or qualitative methodology was best suited to gathering the data.

Evidence was available from: previous literature searches; data related to re-offending rates of low skilled, unemployed offenders; labour force development; education in offender related fields in the UK and comparisons from the USA. Potentially, there was also additional regional and probation trust level data available through government websites and contact with probation trusts. However, probation level data at a local, regional and national level was very limited, which later led to further unanticipated research into attainment levels of community-based offenders.



Choosing to manipulate such data in search of underlying significant relationships and trends would typically be associated with quantitative studies, but as there was also a need for case study research, this indicated the need for an additional qualitative method of research.

Offender education and training processes happen to people. The ultimate aim with this research was to understand what was needed to develop a model that would be effective and would be accepted, reducing resistance and leading to changes in people's behaviour. Understanding how changes may impact on departments, organisations and individual people cannot be fully investigated by quantitative number crunching, looking at trends or conducting surveys. *"In the study of human experience, it is essential to know how people define their situations"* (Marshall and Rossman, 2010). What was needed were methods that enable a deep understanding of individual experiences. These led to qualitative methods as the main choice for researching this complex subject, reinforced by quantitative data collected during the research to enrich the overall approach.

Creswell (2009) explained, *"qualitative research is a means of understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem"*. For the qualitative researcher, *"increasingly use a theoretical lens or perspective in qualitative research, which provides an overall orientating lens"*.

Morrison (2009) highlighted that social phenomenon are complicated to understand, and *"causation cannot be deducted by logic nor, indeed, can it be directly observed in experience. Rather, it can only be inferred from the cumulative and repeated experience of one event following another"*. This, in tandem with Creswell's (2009) definition of variables, helped to test the acceptability of concepts with different groups. Understanding the holistic picture may happen through interacting with many different groups, as they may have different perceptions and priorities.

Some will base their opinions upon life experiences and personal values, and some will look more at quantitative comparisons, for example targets and performance measures. Hamel et al (1993) argue that these types of questions and issues linked to sociological method *"cannot be appropriately considered, or for that matter resolved, by the opposition of quantitative and qualitative methods"*.

A decision was taken that it was essential to incorporate a measurement into the description of the model in the research for it to be accepted by probation services as a viable model. I wanted to hear stakeholders' perceptions to understand better the impact of a proposed model, based on the stakeholders' own belief of what would be successful. The perception of how this impacts on the offender ETE journey, on their lives and their communities, will be a possible follow up study for this research. Following the suggestions of Have (2010), focus was placed on words as prime sources of data for the stakeholder analysis of the research.

#### **4.2 Conceptual Framework: Case study using stakeholder analysis**

There is an intricate relationship between education, training, economic development of offenders, supervision of offenders and the political and economic pressures of operating the supervision of offenders. One would assume this area would have been more thoroughly studied. As described in the literature review, there is conflicting evidence about which precedes the other, or whether ETE is necessarily seen as just another target by probation services. Without a large body of theory to guide this research, Yin's (2009) recommendations were followed. The research began with a general orientation question divided into sub-questions. This helped not to limit the inquiry, consistent with the recommended methodology of qualitative design.

The central research question investigated was split into strands that were identified. These questions formed *"the subject"* of study (Hamel, 2001) and, proceeding from it, came sub-questions that helped me to understand fully what the potentially successful model would look like.

This series of questioning led to the *"the object"* of study (Hamel 2001). This was to understand what is desired by stakeholders in an ideal model based on perception of need and best practice as well as taking an approach where *"Sociological intervention shares with the focus group the five characteristics associated with it from the social innovation perspective"*:

1. *"a purpose, that is, to improve a social situation"* (the context here would be reduction of crime rates and improving probation productivity through an ETE agenda),

2. *“the grouping for this purpose of actors engaged in a social process, to wit, a social struggle”,* (helping offenders access HE that normally they may not have access to),
3. *“the establishment of an innovative practice for conflict resolution”,*
4. *“on the basis of an assessment of practices, norms and values, that is, their analysis”,*
5. *“likely to produce a hyporesearch or even an explanation which, if espoused, engenders in the actors new practices and delivery models”.* In the case of this research this is a useable model that can be replicated to support offenders to HE.

Now that qualitative research had been chosen as the primary research method, the research looked at patterns found within the experiences and understanding of the stakeholders in this study. The data was captured by using multiple stages of data collection and refining the information at each stage, eventually producing a narrow set of data acceptable to the stakeholder groups that could be used to design the model in the future.

The first questions were thought to be a quick process, but led to additional research. This was due to the lack of data on offender prior attainment levels, key to this line of questioning. Authorisation was gained to run a quantitative survey with all offenders newly sentenced to community punishment orders. To gain a representational sample, this research took several months and delayed progress onto the later stages in the research.

This stage was the follow up with questions that emerged from the stakeholder interviews that elicited the rich qualitative data that followed. This was the source of my *“mountain of particulars”* that were needed to shape the theory (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This is described as identifying *“intellectual bins”*, where the categorisation of observations of discrete information and behaviours forms part of the process of conceptualising the research.

The identification of such intellectual bins involved the researcher asking questions about the contents of the responses. This then helped to form more unambiguous theoretical assumptions, enabled the data to be focused and limited the data collection through sampling decisions and appropriate further data gathering. Being a frontline practitioner, I have realised my *“bins”* and conceptual framework are already

partly developed from experience of working in this sector over the past few years. The “bins” are the three areas of: (1) ETE development of offenders will result in less re-offending; (2) the belief that the proposed model also needs to help probation services with their targets and (3) the model needs to be acceptable to stakeholders to increase the likelihood of being used by practitioners in the future.

Before embarking on the full stakeholder analysis, it was important to have basic understanding of a conceptual model. This, in part, was to pilot the research method before engaging with multiple stakeholders and to have a case study with which to engage the stakeholders. With preliminary findings from a pilot case study, there was best practice to talk about, an extra reason for stakeholders to engage and a base model to build from and adapt.

Focusing on using a case study approach (Yin 2009) helped to develop an understanding of the social phenomena that would contribute to this pilot research phase.

*Yin states that “in case studies, the richness of the phenomenon and the extensiveness of the real-life context require case study investigators to cope with a technically distinctive situation”. “Case studies are the preferred method when (a) ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, (b) the investigator has little control over events, (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context”.*

Yin also noted that case studies are useful in understanding technical situations where more than just data needs to be taken into account to understand the full picture. To fully understand what is viable as a model, I relied on multiple sources of evidence with data being triangulated, and using previous studies to help develop robust and reliable theories.

This “all-encompassing” research strategy was helped by *“its intense focus on a single phenomenon within its real-life context. The method is not troubled by the fact that the context contains innumerable variables, where surveys or experiments will not be sufficient”* (Yin 1999).

Based on recommendations from Maykut and Morehouse (1994) of well-structured, qualitative research characteristics, the design of the project had the following elements:

- *“an exploratory and descriptive focus”*
- *“an emergent design”*. There was a broadening and narrowing of the focus of the research. This resulted in the sampling of new stakeholders.
- *“a purposive sample”* where participants were carefully selected for inclusion. Part of this selection decision was based on the possibility that each stakeholder participant had the opportunity to expand the variability of the sample.
- *“data collection in a natural setting”* promoted the personal meaning of the data gathering.
- an *“emphasis on the concept of human as instrument”*, where the researcher had a further responsibility as data collector, deciding on which data to include and of the meaning of that data. This was later presented to the stakeholder groups for validation or as a discussion point to involve them further in the research
- *“qualitative methods of data collection”* were used including: in-depth interviews, group interviews and field notes from the researcher who was a practitioner in the field.
- *“early and on-going data analysis”* was vital to encourage the evolutionary process and the building of categories of meaning. This involved questionnaires that were used to check the researcher’s understanding of some key points from the data gathering activities.
- A case study approach was used to report the research outcomes, which were presented using rich narratives. (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994)

### **4.3 Sample Selection**

According to Miles and Huberman (1994) *“qualitative researchers usually work with small samples of people, nested in their context and studied in depth, unlike quantitative researchers, who aim for larger numbers of context stripped cases and seek statistical significance”*. Qualitative studies’ samples often are not pre-specified. Acknowledging this, my research was designed to evolve once fieldwork began. This process is referred to as *“conceptually driven sequential sampling”*.

Sites and participants were selected that are sociologically representative because of their “*preferred vantage point*” (Hamel et al., 1993). The range included policy makers, administrators, practitioners and consumers of probation services, which included actual offenders. For the investigation of potential funding models for the O2U service, although some stakeholders were briefed on on-going findings, due to many stakeholders’ lack of business experience, interviews were conducted with frontline staff of currently operating charities that support offenders. Charities were selected also due to the transparency that charities must follow regarding business activities, as it was predicted that complex business models and finances might not be shared willingly. Full company accounts and business models are a matter of public record and available from the Charity Commissions website (Charity-Commission, 2014). For the charity sample, six companies were sampled, taking account of length of time in business and business size (e.g. £400,000 to £54m turnover per annum).

The sample was selected using an “*opportunistic*” sampling strategy to locate participants (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This involved following up on leads from interviewees recommending further sample sources. Sampling therefore became “*emergent and sequential*” (ibid). The point where sample size reached saturation point was determined when newly collected data became redundant through duplication with the previously collected data. As the researcher, my experience in education, training, employability and from working in both the prisons and probation services was advantageous in making the connections needed.

Stakeholder interviews were held with two senior managers from the Probation Services at trust level in Bedfordshire and Norfolk; a senior departmental manager in service procurement in Norfolk and Suffolk; a community payback project manager from Norfolk; an offender specialist from Job Centre plus; a funding contract manager from the Skills Funding Agency and a regional director from Serco who manages offender engagement for the UK for both prison and community based provision. The prime focus was on the possible impact of the model in the East of England. The target participants were primarily sourced from in region, or from those whose remit covered the East of England. All stakeholder interviewees identified have similar goals: to encourage reduction of crime through an ETE agenda.

The selection of other stakeholder groups to aid the research was performed in a ‘snowball convenience’ manner. This flexibility helped the model evolve. There was a

need to collect the opinions of offenders serving a community based sentence and of ex-offenders, both of which groups the researcher was given access to. All offender groups were treated as one. However, the offender groups were interviewed separately to protect the groups and for convenience, but due to the nature of the samples' personal experiences and possible bias, there was a possible threat to validity of data. This was mitigated through the review of the evolution of the model using feedback from stakeholders on an on-going basis.

Creswell (2009) explains that there are ten types of threats to internal validity and three types of threats to external validity, most of which apply to the offender groups. These were explored fully in the research, looking at threats to internal validity and external validity, and were mitigated by the precautions taken throughout the selection of the samples and the data collection phase of this research. Even though all offenders were treated as one group, there was a need to ensure that one group did not dominate the research. Data validity was promoted through the categorisation of specific factors that may influence bias from these groups (see figures 7, 8 and 9 below). Although there was not be a quota assigned to the selection of samples from these groups and possible bias factors, e.g. type of crime committed, there was a need to adopt a common sense approach to ensure that there was not an over represented group.

The offender groups were sourced from the Bedfordshire and Norfolk Probation Trusts' caseloads of active and past offenders. There were two groups held in Bedfordshire and two in Norfolk. Each group was made up of six participants, a total of 24 in the offender sample.

	<b><i>Type of Offence</i></b>
1	Caution, Warning Absolute/Conditional Discharge Admonishment
2	Fine
3	Community Disposals
4	Suspended Sentence
5	Prison < 18 months
6	Prison 18 months to 5 Years
7	Prison 5 years & >

**Figure 3: Sample Guide Offender Sample – Types of Offence**

	<b><i>Length of Time Since Restrictions Ended</i></b>
8	Time Since Sentence Restrictions Ended - 0 to < 12 months
9	Time Since Sentence Restrictions Ended - > 12 months to < 24 months
10	Time Since Sentence Restrictions Ended - > 24 months to < 5 years
11	Time Since Sentence Restrictions Ended - > 5 years to < 10 years
12	Time Since Sentence Restrictions Ended - > 10 years

**Figure 4: Sample Guide Offender Sample – Length of Time since Restrictions Ended**

In the initial research design, it was planned to sample the victims of crime. There was to be one group in Bedfordshire and one group in Norfolk. It was harder to restrict the sample size for this group and also the composition of the potential specific areas might bias results. The reason for this was that the groups were voluntary and sizes of the groups fluctuated. Due to the fluctuation in group membership and possible bias towards the proposed O2U framework research, I found the data gathered varied greatly. Later, I decided to discount this group from the research due to the factors influencing consistency in results that I found difficult to relate to the development of a meaningful model.

#### **4.3.1 Categorising types of learners with links to higher education aspirations**

The TNS (2000) model, commissioned by learndirect, is a good model to follow to help categorise learners and their aspirations. The model looks at a good range of potential learners and categorises these into five main groups: “Achieved”, “Unfulfilled”, “Rejecters”, “Disinterested” and “Unfulfilled”. These categories are then split into sub-categories. There is synergy between the TNS categories and this research as it is aimed at adult learners from non-traditional backgrounds, similar to that seen in the offender sample of this thesis.



The Achieved is made up from “ambitious”, “contented”, “youthful”, “ambitious”, “below potential” and “Dreamer - with regrets” sub-clusters.

Achieved: Ambitious	This group is more likely to need little incentive to fully understand what learning opportunities are available. They have the ability to assess their own needs in life and education and then take control of their lives and do something about it. This sub-cluster makes up 4.8% of the UK's adult population.
Achieved: Contented	Mainly engage in learning for fun. This group tend to be older than other groups. This group represents 2.6% of the UK's adult population.
Achieved: Youthful Ambition	This group have achieved a great deal in their lives so far. Relating to the offender group, this could include ex-professionals, or those who could have progressed to university from school, but didn't. They may be motivated to learn towards higher education for professional and personal development aspirations. This group represents 3.1% of the UK's adult population.
Achieved: Below Potential	This group feel they have never reached their potential and see the benefit in learning. This group will require some motivation, but less than other harder to reach clusters. This group represents 4.6% of the UK's adult population.
Achieved: Dreamer - With regrets	This group needs good advice and guidance to enable them to achieve what they perceive as their true potential. This group is primarily aged above 19, but below 25 and look back in time with regret for not taking advantage of learning opportunities. Due to their time away from education, from an offender perspective, they may have additional barriers to education that may require to be supported simultaneously or before learning can be started. This sub-cluster represents 7.2% of the UK's population.

The unfulfilled category consists of: “Low Motivation”, “Carefree”, “Unconfident”, “With potential”, “Time limited” and “Financially constrained”.

Unfulfilled: Low motivation	This group would include those who only learn if they can fit it in, if learning would not clash with another activity. This group represents 7.9% of the UK’s adult population.
Unfulfilled: Carefree	This group look upon learning as something that is not important, when compared with their daily lives and/or working lives. This group represents 4.6% of the UK’s adult population.
Unfulfilled: Unconfident	This group consists of learners who seemingly want to learn, but lack the confidence. With progressing to higher education, this group would need outstanding advice and guidance and potentially a mentor to support them through the application process and possibly the first few terms of university. This group is more prone to rely on a significant other person as a source of motivation and support. Represents 6.5% of the UK’s adult population.
Unfulfilled: With potential	This group need advice and guidance and potentially mentoring to get them back on track as soon as possible, or risk disillusionment with education. This group represents 4.6% of the UK’s adult population.
Unfulfilled: Time limited	This group is less likely to dedicate their own time to learning and may wait for an employer to allocate them time for CPD. Due to this groups perception that others should give them the time for education, there is also more reluctance to self fund

	education as they believe that education should be funded by others. The sub-cluster represents 3.5% of the UK's adult population.
Unfulfilled: Financial Constraints	This group understand the benefits of learning and how it could change their lives, but worry about the financial burden that education could bring them. This acts as a significant barrier to them. This group represents 4.6% of the UK's population.

The uninterested cluster is made up from the following sub-categories:

“Unconcerned”, “Unconfident”, “Rejecters” and “Resigned”.

Uninterested: Unconcerned	This group seem to be content with life as it is and learning is of little interest to them. Unless something happens to them, demanding education, there is little chance that they will be motivated to learn. This group makes up 4.6% of the UK's population.
Uninterested: Unconfident	This group would need a great deal of support, as seen in the low motivation cluster, but would also need a push towards education in general. Higher education is probably not the right progression route for this group, as long courses would be even more difficult for this group as they may struggle with commitment to education. This group represents 13% of the UK's population.
Uninterested: Rejecters	This group is often socially and economically isolated. They are disenchanted with learning, but on occasion may be interested in self-improvement. This group represents

	4.8% of the UK's population.
Uninterested: Resigned	This group see little need to learn. This group is dominated with nearly half of this group over 55 years of age. This group may respond to learning in a group of peers or with their family. This group represents 7.2% of the UK's population.

The final cluster in the TNS learner cluster model is rejecters, which is made up of "individuals" and "resigned".

Individuals	This group are hard to reach who, if a learning opportunity arises, may decide to take advantage, or not. This is recognised from their blasé attitude towards learning. This group represents 5.2% of the UK's adult population.
Rejecters: Resigned	This group look upon learning as having significant emotional and practical barriers that may stop them from even looking for learning opportunities. This group represents 14.3% of the UK's adult population and demonstrates the level of disengaged learners there are in the UK.

This model is also an interesting tool for analysis of the probation and prison service staff perceptions of how the services support offenders to higher education. Although TNS developed the model to identify adults motivation towards learning, the categories have transferability to categorise attitudes towards systems, processes and procedures for supporting offenders to higher education.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

According to Berg (2009) the data analysis process is not rigid, but there are some concerns that this research design takes into account: *"(1) a system that ensures high quality accessibility to the data; (2) Documentation of any analysis that is carried out and (3) Retention and protection of data and related analysis of documents after the study has been completed."*

It was the intention of the design to encourage evolution through flexibility with prepared questions to cover the themes, identifying where to start the exploratory process. These changed throughout the interviews and between interviews. Participant answers weaved in and out of the themes and introduced themes that were not necessarily relevant. As a facilitator, I ensured that we kept on track, whilst honouring the values and voice of the sample.

Yin (2009) recommends having a general analytical strategy in the first place, but this should not be to “*straitjacket the inventive and insightful investigator*”. Discussing some dominant modes of analysis in case studies, Yin described “*converging lines of inquiry*”, where empirically based patterns are compared with predicted ones. Therefore, where results were as predicted, conclusions can be drawn. If the results are different from those originally predicted, the initial presuppositions will need to be queried and the first case improved upon by another, possibly predicting different outcomes from the same variables.

General assumptions were that there are links between educational attainment, employment and re-offending; also that an attractive model will be influenced by probation linked political pressures and performance related targets. There was an assumption regarding the relationship between the ETE delivery and probation trusts’ pressures of day-to-day business, which may be synergistic. The analytic strategy here was through interviews and group discussions, allowing evidence to emerge that would substantiate or refute general assumptions or to find a totally alternative presupposition upon which to base a delivery model. Yin describes this as a “*special type of pattern-matching*” which he calls explanation building.

Various techniques were used to keep track of information gathered from interviews and documents in qualitative analysis. The process was simplified by using a program called NVivo, which facilitated data analysis. This method proved to be less time consuming and more effective. By using NVIV, I was able to examine the words people used in their interviews and discussions, “*find patterns within those words (and actions) and to present those patterns for others to inspect while at the same time staying as close to the construction of the world as the participants originally experienced it*” (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). NVivo was also used to analyse 40 university admission policies as part of the stakeholder analysis and this helped to design some of the questions used with universities.

Babbie (2010) applauded the analytical capabilities of a commercially available qualitative software programmes as they has the capacity to perform better coding and evaluation than that created by hand or through the use of a word processor, or excel. Therefore a decision was taken to use NVivo, which has been specifically designed for qualitative research to assist in the data analysis, coding, and theme recognition. Although categories for attitudes had already been taken from the previous TNS study, the program made it possible to perform multiple queries, cross-referencing, link to the TNS categories, and perform reorganisation of textual data efficiently and accurately.

Using NVivo a series of codes were identified that reflected the broad themes identified in the original elite interviews and from the TNS categories. Each transcript was then coded, cross-referencing against the TNS categories. When uncertainty about the proper coding position surfaced from vague data, the researcher used common sense and personal logic to categorise the data, which according to Greenhalgh and Taylor (1997) is probably the best way of dealing with some qualitative data in small scale research. Interactions between these human perspectives and the NVivo program features, within and between the offender and probation staff samples, were explored insofar as they contributed to supporting offenders to access higher education. Discrepancies in coding were addressed through a reflective and common sense process during which variant data was categorised. Throughout the coding process, emergent themes and findings were identified using the TNS categories as a rough guide to the emerging themes. These were documented through the use of the memo feature in NVivo, short written summaries of findings along particular themes, and regular meetings with the elite interview group was then used to sense check the emerging themes and to discuss the evolving research.

#### **4.5 Data Collection Methods**

##### **Interviews**

Telephone calls were used to gain the cooperation of policy makers, administrators, practitioners and actual offenders in setting up interviews and gathering information. There were three types of interviews that were used to collect information:

### **(1) Open-ended, elite interviews**

*“An interview with an ‘elite’ person is a specialised case of interviewing that focuses on a particular type of interview partner. Elite individuals are considered influential, prominent, and/or well-informed in an organisation or community; they are selected for interviews on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant to the research”*

(Marshall and Rossman, 2010).

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) describe an interview as *“a conversation with a purpose”*. The interviews with policy makers, administrators and practitioners were conducted to solicit their overall insights into the situations and outcomes in their regions and/or areas of responsibility. A range of stakeholders were interviewed, selected from those organisations that support offenders in the community. The initial plan was to hold group meetings and review the research three-monthly, but the samples could not commit to this and the interview process moved to individual interviews. These meetings were then facilitated on a one-to-one basis via telephone.

### **(2) Focused telephone interviews**

Interviewees for these interviews, with frontline staff from probation services and offender related organisations, were selected by the elite interviewees. These interviews were less open-ended and took no longer than 30 minutes. The purpose of these interviews was to measure the reaction to the suggested model designed from the data gathered from the elite interviews. An interview schedule was followed, which was made up of: a personal introduction; purpose statement; statement on confidentiality; a request for permission to take notes; an explanation as to how and why the interviewee was selected for interviewing and a detailed set of questions. The questionnaires were also evolutionary in design, as a better understanding emerged of how the questions were interpreted by the interviewee and the possible need for probe questions to gain clarity.

### **(3) Focus group interviews**

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) defined focus groups as group interviews that emphasise *“dynamic group interactions... combining some of the features of individual interviewing and participant observation”*. *“The purpose of doing a group interview is to bring different perspectives into contact”*. The authors recommend using small groups of people. I conducted four of these group interviews with groups

of offenders, based on availability, so I was not able to predict factors that might bias perception of suitability of service. The sessions took approximately an hour. I facilitated the sessions following an interview schedule but allowing the discussion to evolve. Permission was not gained to record the interviews to ensure accuracy. I had the assistance of a second person that took notes competently.

#### 4.6 Quality of Research Design

There is an agreement among *“academics and policy makers that crime reduction practices and policies”* should be based upon scientifically robust research (Weisburd et al., 2001). Therefore, a robust design has been chosen to maximise the validity of the research. Following the example of Yin (2009) the following criteria was used in designing and judging the quality of research design:

Tests	Tactic	Phase of research in which tactic occurs
<b>Construct Validity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Use multiple sources of evidence</li> <li>&gt; Establish chain of evidence</li> <li>&gt; Have key informants review draft case study report</li> </ul>	data collection data collection composition
<b>Internal Validity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; do pattern matching</li> <li>&gt; do explanation building</li> <li>&gt; address rival explanations</li> <li>&gt; use logic models</li> </ul>	data analysis data analysis data analysis data analysis
<b>External Validity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; use theory in single-case studies</li> <li>&gt; use replication logic in multiple-case studies</li> </ul>	research design research design
<b>Reliability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; use case study protocol</li> <li>&gt; develop case study database</li> </ul>	data analysis data analysis

**Figure 5: Case study tactics for four design tests**

Taking these criteria into account in designing this project, I looked at the following areas: Construct, Internal and External Validity.



Yin (2009) stated there are three tactics for increasing “*construct validity*”. The first uses multiple sources of evidence to encourage similar lines of inquiry. This method was helpful during the data collection phase, as it maximised the use of available data. In this project, I used triangulation among sources of evidence and different methods of data collection (interviews, focus groups, questionnaire, policy documents and statistics) to encourage high quality internal validity. Using the NVivo software to code and group data documented and substantiated emerging themes and trends. The second tactic from Yin is to establish a “*chain of evidence*”, which was achieved through notes, confirmation from samples on evidence recorded and the NVivo software. The third tactic was to have a draft summary of findings reviewed by the key informants. This gave me valuable insight into the quality of my interpretations and helped to involve the key informants further in the research.

The internal validity of the research project was based on the accuracy of the data collected: investigating if it matched the beliefs of and reality for the stakeholder groups. Without this vital validity check, the model that would be developed may not be perceived externally as needed or acceptable. “*A case study involves an inference every time an event cannot be directly observed*” (Yin, 2009). This is a matter of quality control through the involvement of the key informants, as I needed to ensure that my own bias did not influence a recording of a particular event. Yin recommends considering if the researcher’s inference is correct. Should a rival explanation or possibility be considered or is the evidence convergent or stands alone and therefore not relevant?

External validity and reliability arise from the generalising of findings from a separate study. Yin (2009) looks upon this as “*replication logic*” and it should be treated as that of a scientific experiment. The various focus groups and interviews included in the design of this research, from a mix of local, regional and some national key informants, provided good external validation. Most data was collected from individuals. However, there was a need for focus groups with the offenders, as these groups already meet in groups and this would aid data collection. Given the literature reviewed, it was likely that the findings and subsequent model designed from this study would be able to be used in other areas than offender education. However, further case study research in another area with similar requirements would be the next step required to confirm transferability. This is particularly true as key targets,

political pressures, funding models and the concept of acceptability will vary from that related to offenders.

#### **4.7 Possible limitations of research methods**

Potential weaknesses of the study can be found in the focus areas of ETE being linked to reduction in crime and the complexity of the relationship between probation targets and ETE agendas. While these factors are important, they are not the only factors that are proven to support reduction in re-offending. The matters of housing, relationships, alcohol and drugs have been covered in many general offender publications and it is felt that these need to be acknowledged, but not focused upon, in this research. This study can be viewed as having a *“promising realm of effectiveness”* (Lum et al., 2010) due to its proactive dimension of including a varied sample, aimed at direct delivery to a specific group, in limited geographic locations. This strength may also be viewed as a weakness of the study design. This is due to the method of selecting a sample in the offender group in the stakeholder analysis phase.

By the end of the evaluation of the research, this research presents the study results and claims that because the recommendations and opinions of the offender sample have been *“isolated from other confounding causes, the internal validity of the study will be high”*. The possible weakness here is if I have been *“unable to ensure that other factors such as the seriousness of prior records or the social status of offenders”* are not having an influence and have been separated from the *“influence of the recommendations”*. I have noted that the observed behaviour and recommendations from this stakeholder group may be due to such factors. I have taken these factors into account and therefore high validity should be maintained (Weisburd et al., 2001).

To avoid the above risks to internal validity, I constructed a sample-tracking matrix for the offender groups, based on readily available data (Directgov, 2011). This has been designed to analyse groups’; gender; age; academic attainment levels; length of employment; length of unemployment and industrial sectors in which the sample has gained work experience. For the offender groups I also added type of sentence issued to them by the courts and length of time since restrictions ended e.g. when released from prison or when a community punishment licence expired (Walker et al., 2009).

	<b><i>Type of Offence</i></b>
1	Caution Warning Absolute/Conditional Discharge Admonishment
2	Fine
3	Community Disposals
4	Suspended Sentence
5	Prison < 18 months
6	Prison 18 months to 5 Years
7	Prison 5 years & above

**Figure 6: Possible criminal history of offender sample**

	<b><i>Length of Time Since Restrictions Ended</i></b>
8	Time Since Sentence Restrictions Ended - 0 to < 12 months
9	Time Since Sentence Restrictions Ended - > 12 months to < 24 months
10	Time Since Sentence Restrictions Ended - > 24 months to < 5 years
11	Time Since Sentence Restrictions Ended - > 5 years to < 10 years
12	Time Since Sentence Restrictions Ended - > 10 years

**Figure 7: Length of time since restrictions ended for offender sample**

For the victim of crime group the focus changed to the type of crime they were a victim of and the length of time since the crime was reported.

	<b><i>Type of crime victim has received</i></b>
	<b>Violence against the person offences</b>
1	Violence against the person - with injury
2	Violence against the person - without injury
	<b>Sexual offences</b>
3	Most serious sexual crime
4	Other sexual offences
	<b>Robbery offences</b>
5	Robbery of business property
6	Robbery of personal property
	<b>Burglary offences</b>
7	Burglary in a dwelling
8	Burglary in a building other than a dwelling
9	Offences against vehicles
	<b>Other theft offences</b>

10	Theft from the person
11	Theft of unauthorised taking of a pedal cycle
12	Fraud or forgery offences
13	Criminal damage offences
14	Drug offences
15	Other miscellaneous offences

**Figure 8: Types of crime victim sample received**

Internal validity is not the only issue when dealing with these groups. Ethical considerations of dealing with vulnerable groups are explored in the next section. It was vital to the success of this research that it was conducted in the best interests of the sample and of the potential beneficiaries of the end model that will hopefully evolve from this.

#### **4.8 Ethical Considerations**

Creswell (2009) stressed that *“as researchers anticipate data collection, they need to respect the participants and the sites for research. Many ethical issues arise during this stage of the research”*. Through the inclusion of a varied base of participants, some recommended to the project, attention was paid to being as objective and inclusive as possible. The matter of recruitment of respondents, via informed consent, was an integral part of the design and allowed for different data gathering methods to maximise participation, whilst maintaining high quality and validity. Fieldwork was conducted in a manner avoiding harm to others, and confidentiality and anonymity were protected. When contacting prospective respondents, whether by letter or telephone, a summary of the study’s aims was fully explained to those who were invited to participate.

For the stakeholder interviews, and for the majority of the stakeholder engagement, the above standard approach to research ethics seemed acceptable. This approach needed to be further explored when it came to the focus groups of offenders and ex-offenders. There is plenty written on the subjects of incarcerated offenders which was helpful in designing the ethical elements of this research.

Under definitions contained in the Framework for Research Ethics (FRE) (ESRC, 2010) there should be extra care taken with research *“which would normally be considered as involving more than minimal risk”*. As this research engaged with

vulnerable groups who could potentially be victims of crime (including those working with offenders) and potential perpetrators of crime, there was more than minimal risk of it falling into the following categories:

- *“Research involving potentially vulnerable groups*
- *Research involving those who lack capacity*
- *Research involving sensitive topics*
- *Research involving groups where permission of a gatekeeper is normally required*
- *Research involving records of personal or sensitive, confidential information*
- *Research which might involve psychological stress*
- *Research where the safety of the researcher may be in question*
- *Research involving respondents through the internet*
- *Other research involving visual/vocal methods” (ESRC, 2010)*

Reading the literature, ethical research with children and young people is similar to that which I have structured into this research design. I ensured that consent was fully informed, the research did no harm, and confidentiality was protected. In addition to this, Gorman (2007) details four principles that seem to be applicable to all types of research and essential to this project. These are *“autonomy”* (respect for persons); *“beneficence”* (meaning to do good); *“non-maleficence”* (meaning not to do harm) and *“justice”* (how risk and benefit of the research are shared). Gorman (2007) lists nine questions, which cover these principles, which I used in the design of this research and will help with the literature review search criteria.

1. *“Who will benefit?*
2. *Who might be harmed?*
3. *How might they be harmed?*
4. *Does the potential harm outweigh the potential benefit?*
5. *How can the possibility of harm be reduced?*
6. *Are there any conflicts of interest for the researcher?*
7. *Have participants consented fully?*
8. *What does the research involve for participants?*
9. *Are they aware of the risks?”*

Now that these sections of the methodology have been explored, the following chapter details the results of the research that was completed.

## **Chapter 5: Analysis of results**

Although all probation trusts, prisons, universities and other organisations that support offenders work within the same legal frameworks, there are differences in how these are interpreted and implemented, practically, procedurally and with variable results. This chapter helps to explore findings of the research phase of this thesis in an attempt to start to answer the central research question: “How do you design a community based offender education model that incorporates support to access Higher Education?” The data examines prior attainment of offenders, what offenders want and need to progress to university and how universities and other stakeholder organisations support offender applications to university.

### **5.1 Prior attainment of offenders in the community**

There is a great deal written about offenders generally having lower attainment levels gained from compulsory education, poor uptake and progression to further education and lower chances of securing sustainable employment. With this in mind, at the beginning of this research one would presume that relevant attainment data would be available to analyse. Unfortunately, this data was not available for community-based offenders at a national or local level, where it was found that assumptions were based on relatively small samples of national statistics. This study focused on two specific probation areas where initial data was gathered: the Norfolk and Suffolk Probation Trust and Bedfordshire Probation Trust.

During the period between March 2011 and July 2012, 397 individual offenders were sampled to identify their highest prior attainment level (see appendix 1). The purpose of this was to start the discussion around the potential need for a service to support offenders to HE, by demonstrating that, although most offenders did fit the low skills/attainment stereotype, some did not and may require support to progress to higher levels of education.

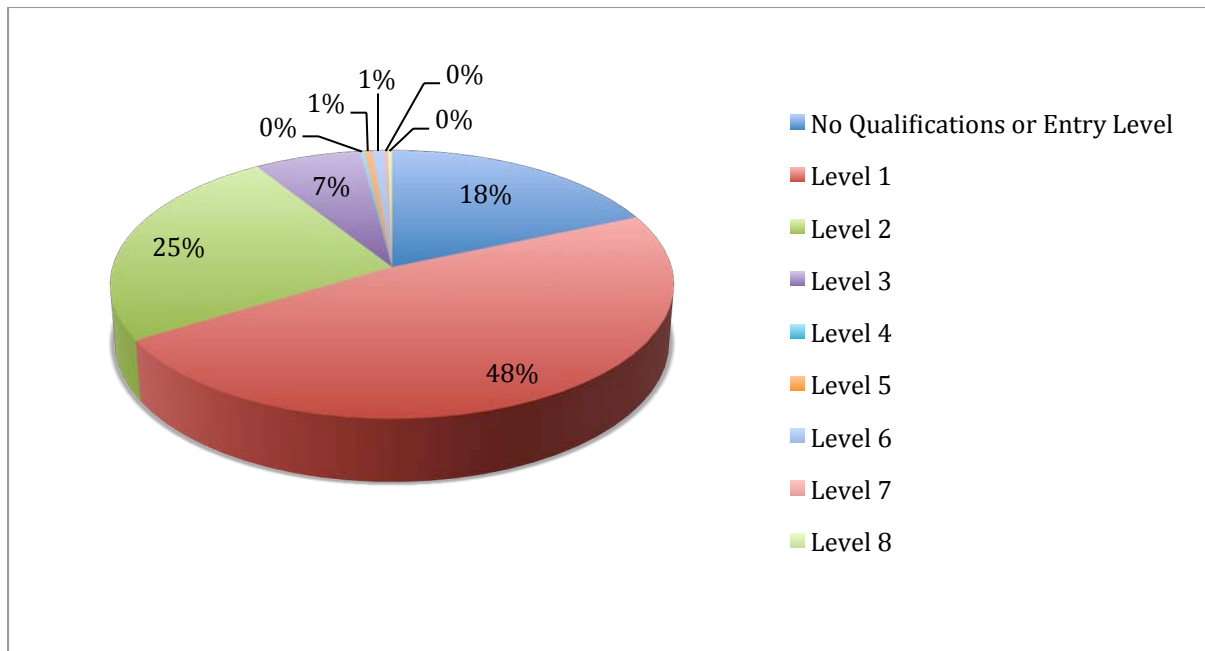
The results of the data collection showed that 66% of the sample attainment was below that of the equivalent of five GCSEs grade A to C (including Maths and

English), Level 2. 25% had achieved the benchmark compulsory education level of Level 2 and 9% had previous attainment above this level.

The interesting statistic here is that 34% of those sampled had previously reached an academic attainment level that would be considered appropriate for entry into higher education as an adult learner: Level 2 or above (presuming they had industry experience in the subject they wanted to study). 9% of those sampled had achieved A levels or equivalents, which are more widely recognised as entry requirements for universities. Eight of the sample, 2%, had previously achieved a graduate or postgraduate level qualification.

An obvious gap in the data can be seen where grades have not been collected from the sample for Level 3 qualifications and above. However, the sample group was questioned about Level 2 qualifications. The definition for Level 2 is full Level 2 NVQ or five GCSEs at grades A to C, including Maths and English. Of the Level 2 sample, 47 (49%) did not have the required GCSE results, but did achieve an NVQ at the required level. Further research may be required to identify the Level 2 sample group's academic readiness and ability to progress to HE as, according to the curriculum chapter of this thesis, most NVQs do not prepare learners with the required skills needed to progress to HE.

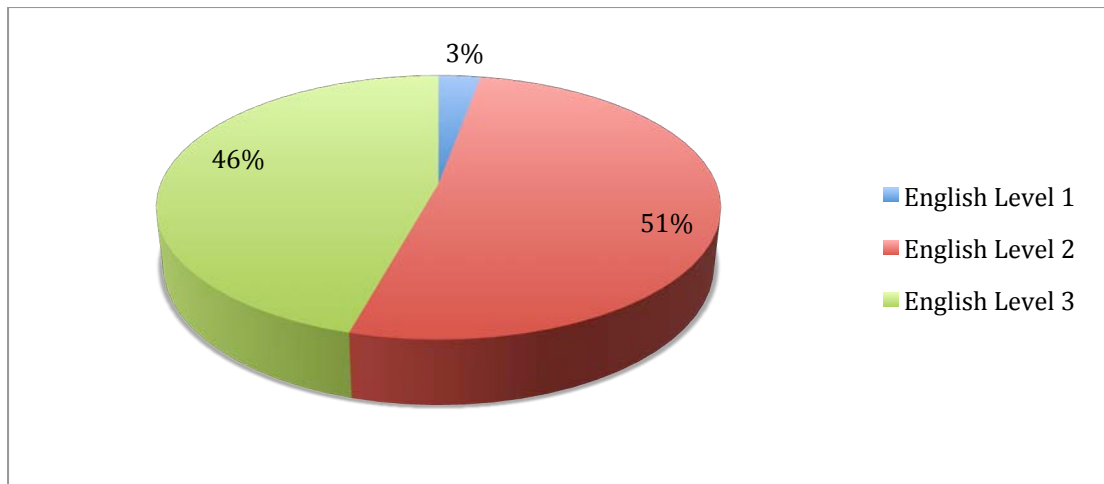
What did stand out in this preliminary quantitative research was that 9% of the sample had achieved A level equivalent qualifications and should therefore be able to survive the academic pressures of university life, if they were so motivated. This does not rule out the ability of some of the Level 2 sample, but the focus of this discussion will now focus on the attainment levels above this for the purposes of this chapter.



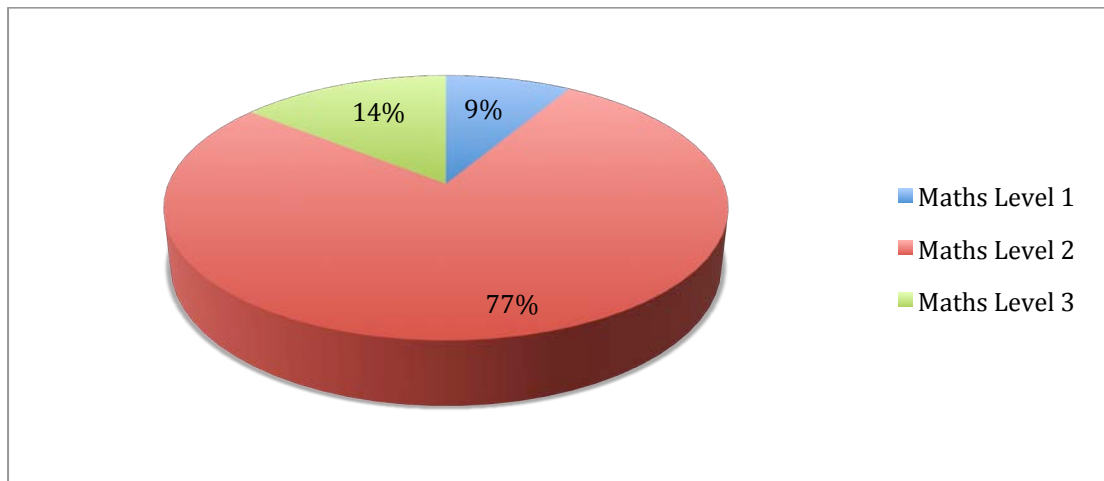
**Figure 9: Prior Attainment Levels of Offender Sample**

The next phase in validating this data was to interview all 35 offenders who declared Level 3 or above qualifications, regarding their prior attainment. The sample showed the interviewer their certificates and were formally assessed with regards to their skills levels in Maths and English using the BKSB assessment tool (BKSB, 2014). Demonstrated through the production of original certificates, the original responses were 77% accurate. However, it should be noted that, according to responses, due to the chaotic lifestyle of some offenders, certificates may have been lost or be in storage. The entire sample of offenders with post Level 2 attainment re-confirmed, as part of questioning, that they had achieved the qualifications previously stated and could describe the course, education provider and what they enjoyed/disliked about their previous learning experiences (see appendix 2). This demonstrated the high validity of the declared information. When the same sample completed the BKSB assessments, the results showed that 97% of the sample demonstrated above Level 2 literacy skills and 46% at A level standard or above. The assessment in Maths showed that 91% of these offenders demonstrated ability at above Level 2, with 14% at or above A level standard. These results, combined with physical evidence gained from witnessing original certificates, validates the data regarding prior attainment and the ability of the sample to be able to study to the level of a university level course.





**Figure 10: Assessed English Skills Levels of Offender Sample**



**Figure 11: Assessed Maths Skills Levels of Offender Sample**

## **5.2 Summary of what offenders need to get to university and survive Higher Education**

The results in the previous section seemed high. From the perspective of being a practitioner, one tends to see that if students do not use a skill, they tend to forget some of the basics. This is seen especially in Maths because, with English, adults tend to use their literacy skills in everyday life but the most advanced skills in numeracy are not used regularly. According to Bond et al. (2013), reflecting on adults attempting to enter teacher training programmes, many adults forget the basics which are required in Maths and English to enter graduate teaching programmes. This is partially due to the levels of support schools give students to prepare for exams, as opposed to embedding learning, and partially due to the prospective students not using some of their Maths and English skills since school. This aside,

the results show that 9% of the sample would be capable of progressing in HE, if willing, which will be discussed later. Additionally, it should be presumed that a proportion of the Level 2 sample could also progress to HE, as Level 2 is part of many degree programme entry requirements (QAA, 2013).

For university applicants below the age of 19, the better the university, the higher grades that are required. GCSE results then become a factor and some more elite universities will exclude re-sits of examinations to be further selective. The choice of A level subjects will also influence the applicant's ability to secure a place at university. An obvious example would be that without a good Maths A level, it may be difficult to study a Maths degree (Thompson et al., 2012).

With regards to our offender sample, all aged over 19, the rules seem to be different. As an example, the University of Leicester summarises most universities' attitudes to adults accessing HE:

*"Our principal criterion for entry is to ensure... that mature students will be able to manage the course and complete it successfully. Some background in" the discipline "is essential for our degrees, but equally important are flexibility, determination and organisation, skills that mature students often have in abundance. Every mature applicant comes with a unique set of qualifications and skills and we deal with each case on an individual basis. We therefore encourage you to contact us as early as possible, preferably before making an official application, with a detailed listing of all your qualifications and experience so that we can advise you on the best route into Higher Education."* (Leicester, 2014)

This message is reinforced in the literature review chapter of this thesis with regards to the value Wolf (2011) places on how well vocational qualifications prepared students for progression to higher levels of learning. It is therefore evident that, in many cases, offenders wishing to progress to HE require essential core skills (Maths, English and ICT) to the level appropriate for their degree choice. A 'one size fits all' approach would be desirable here, but would not take into account all university/course specific requirements of entry.

As part of the research, two organisations were identified that currently support offenders to access, progress and achieve in HE: Longford Trust and Goldsmiths.

### ***Longford Trust***

“The Longford Trust was established in 2002 by friends, family and admirers of Lord Longford (1905-2001) to celebrate his achievements and to further the goals he pursued in the fields of social and prison reform” (Longford, 2013). Quite unexpectedly, whilst conducting research regarding how universities and other organisations support offenders to access HE, the Longford Trust was discovered through discussion with the University of Leicester. During the research certain universities stood out as being more inclusive than others, but nothing appeared comparable to the provision provided by the Longford Trust.

### **Background on the inception of the Longford Trust**

During Lord Longford’s time as a don at Oxford University, Longford became interested in prisons and prison reform. He was influenced by the Christian message of “hate the sin, but love the sinner.” This formed the basis of his subsequent work. As part of preparing this case study, his daughter, Rachel Billington, was interviewed stating; “He never condoned criminal actions but always believed in the possibility of change, however hardened the criminal.” Longford went on to encounter both negative press interest and criticism, particularly through his involvement with Myra Hindley, although she was only one of many offenders he supported over the years. His daughter commented that she “often comes across people who remember my father with enormous and personal gratitude and affection. To him, everybody was equal in the eyes of God and therefore also to him. He set a great example.” Part of the legacy of the Longford Trust is the annual lecture, which has been conducted by various notable figures over the years including Cherie Blair QC, Archbishop Tutu and Jon Snow.

Under the Longford Trust umbrella there are two different types of scholarship available to ex-prisoners to “enable them to continue their rehabilitation by studying for degrees at a UK university or equivalent UK institute” (Longford, 2013). There is the Longford Scholarship Scheme and the subject specific Patrick Pakenham Award. This award was established in memory of Lord Longford’s son who was a practising barrister, and offers support to ex-offenders who want to go on to study Law. This award not only provides assistance for the initial three years of a standard law

degree but also for the one year post graduate professional qualification required by the Law Society.

The Longford Lectures are sponsored by The Daily Telegraph and held annually. These lectures are open to all, free to access and are designed to be engaging but also to provide “a national platform for a serious contribution to questions of social and penal reform” (ibid). Instead of the traditional lecture format, the Trust chose, on one occasion, to host a debate centred on the state of the prison system. One of those speaking was Jason Warr, whose story is detailed below.

A particular point of note in relation to the provision of all these awards is the holistic approach taken by the Trust. Far from simply providing the funding for the degree programme itself, it also supports the student as a whole. They state that every student will be assigned a mentor to offer “practical, emotional and psychological support during their time at university.”

There is one individual case study that deserves highlighting. Jason Warr did well out of prison education. Jailed for murder at the age of 19, he began his incarceration with a few low-grade GCSEs. By the time he was released from prison, 12 years later, he had enough credits from the Open University Philosophy courses to get an unconditional offer for a degree place in the subject at the London School of Economics. An MPhil in criminological research at Cambridge followed, and now, at the age of 37, he is completing a PhD at the university, on the work of UK prison psychologists.

This case study illustrates some of the benefits of having specific support for this niche group of offenders. It demonstrates that, without the support of institutions such as the Open University and benevolent provision, as seen in this case study, offenders such as Jason would probably not achieve their full potential. Jason’s case is exceptional and, speaking to Jason, he feels he was in the right prison at the right time to interact with services to support progression to HE. As he moved around the prison estate, during his 12 years in incarceration, the flexibility and transferability of the Open University study mode was essential in supporting continuous access to learning. The credit transfer system now in place in Europe also played its part in this success story, with accredited prior attainment being recognised, thus further supporting progression.

### ***Goldsmiths, University of London***

“The Goldsmiths Open Book project based at Goldsmiths, sets out to raise aspiration, recruit, prepare and support individuals from amongst the hardest to reach communities, including those from offending and addiction backgrounds, into education, from pre-access through to and beyond undergraduate level study” (Goldsmiths, 2012).

The basic ethos of Open Book challenges many previously held conceptions regarding the accessibility of university level education and also makes reference in its mission statement to the extension of support right through the learner’s journey, “from pre-access through to and beyond undergraduate level study.” The Open Book project speaks of its acknowledgement of the “therapeutic and life changing nature of learning and was established to support those at the margins of our communities who would not usually engage with education at a higher level.”

The level of support offered by this project reflects, to some extent, the seven pathways model for reducing re-offending (Sampson and Laub, 1993) as clear reference is made to the need to support the student as a whole and there is the provision of a 24 hour helpline, not only to provide academic support, but also pastoral support.

One student who has benefitted from the Open Book project stated; “Here, tutors and Open Book have worked with me on an individual level. Their support and therein my experience has been tailored to suit me. It has been a personal struggle to make my past and my life as a student complicit.” He went on to state that; “Goldsmiths is a special place. It stands out from the other Universities. Goldsmiths has allowed me a sense of social mobility and social inclusion that I did not feel before. Everything here is set up for students to succeed, however unconventional their background can be.”

### **5.3 Summary of what offenders “want” to be able to access and succeed in HE**

The offender groups were sourced from Bedfordshire and Norfolk Probation Trusts’ caseloads of active and past offenders. There were two groups held in Bedfordshire and two in Norfolk. Each group was made up of six participants, a total of 24 in the offender sample. The difficulty here was to focus on those group members who would potentially be eligible to progress to university, based on ability and interest in HE. The initial prior attainment survey, completed as part of the research, identified

35 potential offenders out of a sample of 397 surveyed, who had a high probability of being able to progress onto HE. 24 of these agreed to participate in group interviews (see appendix 2). For this section, NVivo was used for text analysis to help to identify trends in phrases used by the offender sample. To illustrate the mix in types of offenders' potential target trajectories, three of those samples have been written into case studies below.

***Example Interview 1: Unfulfilled: Financial Constraints and Achieved: Ambitious: Independent learner whose perceived barrier is only linked to finance, but has not had student finance advice. Motivated by employment.***

This interviewee had previously achieved an undergraduate degree and indicated he would like to continue his studies to postgraduate level. He had gained a degree in Biomedical Engineering. After graduation he found employment in a hospital-based position, one that he reports to have greatly enjoyed. This would be an area of employment he was hoping to return to in the long term.

When asked the reason for his ambition to return to education, he was quite clear that it was to enable him to find employment. He explained that purely having the Biomedical Engineering degree was no longer sufficient in the current job market, but that were he to get his PhD he would become ultimately more employable.

Initially, when asked as to whether he felt there to be any barriers to him gaining a place at university, the instant answer was 'no'. It is interesting to note that he did not perceive there to be any barriers to university, despite having a criminal record. He spoke of having completed some research and that, from that research, including reading university admissions policies related to offenders, he did not perceive admissions policy to be a barrier to him accessing further learning. However, it should be noted that the interviewee's research had been limited to the local university, as he only wants to study there due to family commitments. A point of interest here is that this university currently supports this specific subject to Masters level, which may indicate the need for structured advice and guidance.

The interviewee stated that the purpose of the postgraduate qualification was purely to assist him in finding employment. There was no element of wishing to study to gain personal self-development, although he did discuss that were he able to return

to the field of hospital work, that would lead to a sense of self-fulfilment. When a discussion started related to the interviewee's current status as unemployed, he stated that he was not willing to work in a job that was "below" him. When a different group member asked the interviewee why he did not just get a job, as "you are obviously smart", the interviewee's response was that he would go to university first, get a PHD and then get a job. "I'm not willing to work in a shit job. I would rather not work... If someone just gives me the money to study my PHD, I would be able to get a good job." When asked if he had considered student finance, he replied, "Getting in debt is a mug's game, which I will probably be forced to do or risk being unemployed for the rest of my life. I've not looked at student finance at the moment, I was looking for a grant." On the subject of his return to hospital work, he was initially optimistic and had not given consideration to the fact that his offence may place a barrier to that ambition.

In conclusion, the only barrier the interviewee had identified was a financial one. He did not feel excluded from the university admissions process, but felt he did need support financially to complete his postgraduate qualification. It was apparent, through further investigation after the interview, that, although in interview the offender did sound confident about his independent research, there were errors and omissions in his potential selection of course/university. This demonstrates a requirement for informed advice and guidance for course selection, career management and finance, prior to access to university. There was limited information shared on potential support that the offender may require during studies if successfully enrolled, as he repeatedly referred to financial support being the only support he required throughout any foreseen educational journey.

***Example Interview 2: Unfulfilled: Unconfident: Reliant on mentor support for pre and post admission to university. Motivated by employment and helping people with similar life experiences.***

Interviewee 2 had completed various courses whilst in prison, although at the time of interview was unsure of the exact levels he had completed. He explained how keen he was to pursue a BSc in Criminology. His first choice was Law, but he felt that he might not have the academic ability to complete this, so decided on Criminology. When asked where he gained this perception from, the interviewee replied, "My mate has done a Law degree". He stated that his interest in this area developed from his

time spent in prison and he is very motivated to gain a qualification that would allow him to work with young offenders in a support and mentoring role. He stated that he felt that his time in prison had influenced his chosen path, making him committed to assisting other young people who find themselves in his situation.

He had conducted research into a university level education, although had not pursued research into any universities other than his first choice of the local university. This is because he felt unable to travel any further than the local campus. Interviewee 2 stated he had “made significant progress” with the application process and “now has a UCAS account number”. Getting to this stage in the application process represented a “huge achievement” as he felt “very overwhelmed” by the amount of information required and the necessary forms to fill in. Interviewee 2 then described how he is supported by his partner to “fill in forms, who is also studying at degree level...Her encouragement has been pivotal, both practically and emotionally”.

He identified that the next area to work on was the student finance application. This was identified as a potential barrier as “once again the initial onslaught of paperwork is perceived as rather overwhelming, especially surrounding the issue of finance.”

Interviewee 2 stated he was hoping to complete his degree programme primarily as a route into employment, with a specific “*desired*” role, which in turn would lead to him gaining a feeling of “self-fulfilment”.

Interestingly, rather than his offences being seen as a barrier to employment, Interviewee 2 perceived his past to be of “practical positive assistance in gaining employment”. He felt that young people would react to him more positively, bearing in mind he would be speaking from experience, and he would be able to be considered “one of them, which should aid me in a mentoring capacity”.

In conclusion, Interviewee 2 seemed committed to gaining, not only a degree in Criminology, but also participating in the “university experience”. He mentioned his desire to participate in social clubs and activities to enhance the overall learning experience. He felt that he was well supported by his partner, who was also starting a course of study at the same university and stated that his key motivator was to help people like him, “people who have made mistakes and want to go straight.”



***Example Interview 3: The dreamer (without regret). Unclear aspiration, multiple barriers to accessing Higher Education, little evidence of prior attainment.***

Interviewee 3 was unsure about future studies, but was interested in the potential of progressing to university. Prior to interview he had experienced a “chaotic period” in his life. He had recently been released from prison to a local bail hostel, on licence for life (due to the seriousness of his offences), and then experienced a period of homelessness. Initially, he expressed interest in “accountancy, business or maybe English”. He had completed some prior learning, but was unsure of exactly what level he had achieved.

During the course of the interview, and throughout the group discussion, he shared his “genuine passion” which is for a “career in sports journalism”. Once he began talking about sports journalism he became animated in body and in his tone/volume of his voice, possibly showing passion for his subject. He stated he had conducted some research into the provision of this at the local university, and had discovered that “it offers some award winning courses in the area of journalism, particularly sports related”. This “encouraged” him further, although he “lacked a little confidence and need prompting in order to believe this would be something that I could achieve”.

Interviewee 3 remained focused on the local university and had “well thought through reasons for this”. He had experienced a period of homelessness after leaving prison and is “currently in dialogue with the Council”, hoping to secure accommodation, “which is 15 minutes’ walk from the university”. Interviewee 3 specifically stated he required his housing needs to be met before considering his move on to HE, “as this is my main priority at the moment.”

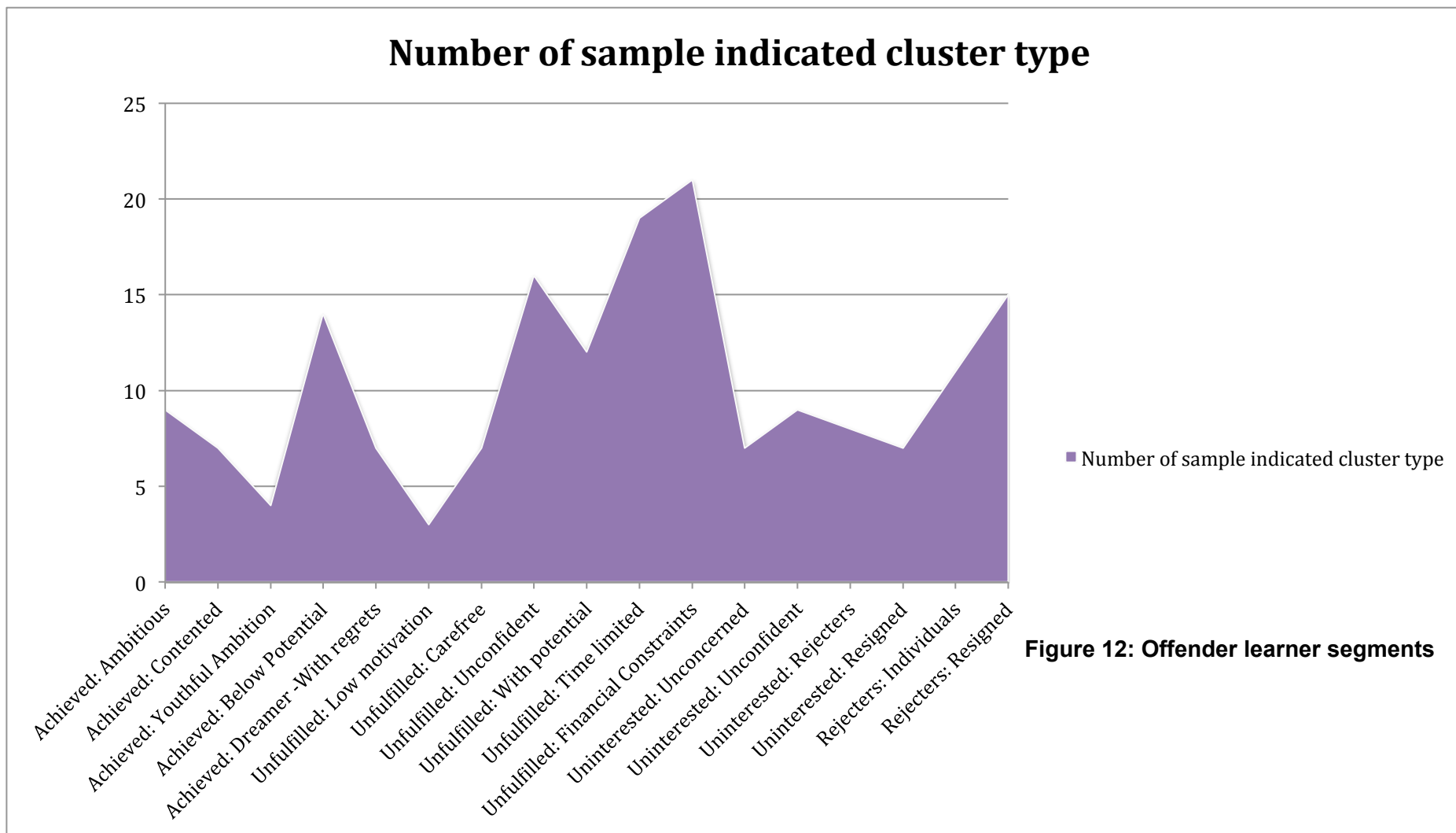
He stated he had “researched the possibility of attaining a place at the university”, and believed that he would be able to secure a place. In the opinion of the interviewee, the nature of his offence would “not prohibit me from pursuing a career as a sports reporter or going to university”. When asked by one of the other group members about his online profile on such websites as Google, (referring back to his statement of being on licence for life), the interviewee stated that he had changed his name by “depol”, referring to the government’s Deed Poll Service (Gov.UK, 2012). The interviewee stated, “This would not be a problem, as my new name is not linked to any criminal history.”

Further areas of support were identified: assistance in completing application paperwork and dealing with student finance. Interviewee 3 provides an example of the importance of basic needs and expectations being met before routes of academic study can be planned effectively. Advice and guidance related to housing, finance and a better understanding of career and degree choice is required, in addition to identifying clearly the offender's prior attainment levels and the potential impact of previous criminal convictions. This offender had been homeless, lost his certificates and stated that he could not remember his grade, "but they were alright and I think they were above a C".

Although this example has been categorised as a dreamer, the official TNS category was dreamer: with regrets. The reason for the omission of the "with regrets" definition was due to this individual not exhibiting any regrets regarding education.

Throughout the research there were examples of individual learner characteristics seen throughout the TNS (2000) learner segmentation model. Key trends were seen linked to support required to access higher education, funding and the need to ensure that the offenders understood what potential barriers faced them, as the fear of the unknown was a theme with most of those sampled. Although the TNS model does refer to these categories as separate, from the data, it is difficult to separate all of these categories, as there was evidence that the sample at times were in more than one category (see figure 12).

This rich data came from comments that the 24 offenders sampled who shared information about their perceptions in the group interviews and seemed to flow between categories in the TNS model, depending on the topic being discussed. What was evident from the data was that for those motivated by personal and professional development seemed more effected by financial barriers (88%), confidence to progress to university (67%) and were concerned with how they would find the time to study (79%). 58% of those sampled stated that they had previously achieved in education, but their criminogenic past had halted their academic progression and 38% felt they could achieve more in life through academic progression leading to a better job.



**Figure 12: Offender learner segments**

Although there were many positive comments from the sample regarding the potential of progressing to higher education, 63% of those sampled felt that their offending past would be a major barrier to accessing higher education and well paid jobs, placing them in the Rejecter: Resigned category. “Why should we bother with going to uni. Even if we get in, no one will give me a job with my record.” This comment that was assigned to the Rejecter: Resigned category seems a common thread in the sample and is an indication of the requirement for on-going mentoring of offenders so they are able to progress towards learning outcomes that help them fulfil their potential.

Although the TNS model has been useful to categorise potential groups for the offenders to belong to, due to age, gender and the fact that all of those sampled were offenders, this model may be best used as a support tool during mentoring to initial assess suitability for and to track offenders motivation towards and in higher education.

#### **5.4 Summary of what support is available to offenders pre and post application to study at university**

This section examines the support that is available from various stakeholders that could support offenders in accessing HE. The stakeholders identified are: probation services; universities and prisons (a summary is considered below). Although this list is not exhaustive, it does cover the spectrum of types of support that are available to offenders from point of contact and referral, with prisons to probation services, and through to universities.

Data from each stakeholder has been collected via interview and analysis of available public information, in the form of policies and reports. Policies and reports have been analysed using NVivo to explore connections and to identify if policies are supportive of offenders progressing to university, or could possibly be seen as potential barriers due to the nature of design, presentation and/or accessibility. The perception of elites working for the stakeholders (elites being defined as experienced workers at senior management level) has played a key part in the assumptions that are contained in this section.

### **5.5 Summary of how Probation Services support offenders to access higher education**

In this section the TNS (2000) categories of Achieved, Unfulfilled, Uninterested and Rejecters that were used to code the offender learners into segments have also been used to gain an understanding of how probation attitudes and perceptions relate to the offenders themselves and the potential of supporting progression to higher education.

The reason for choosing to code probation staff and offenders attitudes towards supporting offenders to HE is based on a number of studies in other service related sectors seen in examples drawn from a general customer services environment; teaching and prisons.

In a customer service environment it has been evidenced that employee perceptions and attitudes towards a brand are similar (Schultz et al., 2012). In this example employee perceptions lacked uniformity, where customers attitudes were directly linked to how much they would spend on that brand. There is similarities here that are seen in the offender comparison, where probation staff perceptions and attitudes towards supporting offenders towards HE, mainly dismissive, have a direct impact on how the offenders may seen and be able to access services that may enable them to access support to progress to higher education. Schultz et al. goes onto comment that a 10% increase of focus on a brand value can increase spending on that brand by 22%. This can also be translated into recommendations found later in this thesis around increased training for probation staff to help them promote the benefits of accessing higher education.

In teaching there have been a number of studies linking teachers attitudes towards teaching and student attainment capabilities and that of the students themselves (Wenglinsky, 2002, Klem and Connell, 2004, Skinner and Belmont, 1993). Teachers in these studies are seen as a role model having direct impact on the way that students perceive themselves and their own capabilities. In some cases mirroring the language and attitudes of their teachers, be that negative or positive (Klem and Connell, 2004). This also has similarities to how similar probation staff attitudes are potentially to that of the offender themselves, as they play the role of the mentor, guiding offenders towards potential solutions to their criminogenic lifestyle with the aim being to reduce reoffending. Probation staff, acting as mentors, have a direct impact on offenders and this perceived direct influence and potential mirroring of

attitudes towards support to access HE is another reason for grouping offenders and probation staff using the same potential groups used from the TNS study.

In an offender related study on prison inmates and prison officers, prison officers attitudes and behaviour directly impacted on that of the inmates (Crewe et al., 2011). Where a prison officer was “anti-prisoner” and “anti-rehabilitation” the inmate’s attitude and behaviour was seen to be relational, from the perspective of the inmate, and to be “anti-management” and “anti-establishment”. This direct correlation between behaviours is the final justification for using the same grouping terminology for the offenders and probation staff.

There is a great deal written on how probation services support offenders through the rehabilitation work they do. There is clear evidence that probation services are not equipped to support higher attainment level offenders with educational needs above Level 1.

“Offenders often do not have the basic skills necessary to find and keep a job. The number of basic skills qualifications gained by offenders has increased more than tenfold in two years. More than 10% of adults who gain basic skills qualifications are doing so from prison.” (Portsmouth, 2010)

When attempting to analyse the generic policies held by probation in regard to the promotion of access to HE, it was necessary to review various policies, widely available in the public domain, and documentary evidence from a cross section of probation trusts. This search did not find any HE specific documentation, which later was confirmed to be because there was no policy written regarding HE. Throughout this section of the report there will be references to the official policies and procedures from several probation trusts. These included: Bedfordshire Probation Trust; Norfolk and Suffolk Probation Trust; Hertfordshire Probation Trust and Derbyshire Probation Trust. One of the inter-linking resources this case study refers to is the websites for the different probation service trusts. These websites provide a useful and relevant snapshot of each individual trust’s key aims and policies and also offer a search facility for the user.

Hertfordshire Probation Trust website (Hertfordshire, 2011) detailed the provision of basic reading, writing and literacy skills in terms of being a condition imposed from

the court. There is no mention of provision for offenders who may wish to continue their education voluntarily and to a higher standard. However, Hertfordshire Probation Trust states that core to its service is “enabling offenders to access to Further Education and employment and facilitating anger management programmes and drug and alcohol treatments that are designed to enable offenders to stop committing a wide range of offences, including drink-driving and domestic violence.” The focus here refers to FE, but to what extent this is practised is not evident from interviewing their staff.

Examining the extensive offender case studies available on various websites, very few refer to outcomes that are education related. There are numerous examples that reflect employment, resettlement or charity work, but, notably, only one success story reflecting offenders accessing HE. This was found in a NOMS funded piece of research (Canton et al., 2011). Positive commonalities among probation areas are the “key aspects of... an early, intense focus on assessing the offender learner’s needs, setting these out in an individual learning plan and, bolstered by information, advice and guidance arrangements, working to ensure those needs are delivered in a joined-up way as the offender progresses through the Criminal Justice System” (ibid). This is an acknowledgement of the need to have a coherent and supportive system in place to meet the needs of offenders, both in prison, through the gates and whilst in the community.

At this stage, the search was halted as no new evidence could be sourced. What was available was then summarised and used as part of the interviews with stakeholder staff. Detailed below is a summary of responses from those interviews.

### **What provision is available now to support offenders into Higher Education?**

The only service available to offenders is the Job Deal project, which facilitates access to training. The definition for Job Deal is: “Job Deal aims to provide offenders with the support and skills they need to help them find work and live a stable, healthy, law-abiding life after the end of their sentence” (Serco, 2011). This is a NOMS ESF project that supports general education, training and employment needs. As part of this research, a project manager for Job Deal in Norfolk stated, “we mainly support lower level clients into work. During my time on Job Deal, we have not helped anyone go to university. A couple to college, but our focus is on work. Out of our caseload of 180’ish clients, we only have to support two into accredited learning per month. That could be a six-hour course. You can see why we may not focus on

HE.” (Allocated as Rejecter: Resigned, as comments seem to be based on the presumption that there is little need for higher education for offenders due to low attainment levels of offenders and the referrals the project gets)

“If the offender has already achieved a Level 2 or above qualification, there is nothing I can refer them to. If there was more availability of courses at higher levels, I might refer to it, depending on the level of risk of re-offending... Reducing the potential of short term re-offending is a higher priority than education.” (Rejecter: Resigned and Uninterested: Rejecter)

The training tends not to be HE based, but “more modular, focussing on CSCS, forklift – short sharp shock not long courses, but focus on useful courses that will get offenders into a work environment quickly.” When questioned on what other service probation officers would refer to for higher ability offenders, the general response was that probation officers focus on reducing re-offending. “If education was a tool to ensure a job, we would use it to help offenders with short term goals. Higher Education is a long-term goal and my clients may have re-offended by the time they get there.” (Rejecter: Resigned and Uninterested: Rejecter)

### **What other provision is out there to support offenders to access Higher Education?**

“None” and “Not aware of any other provision out there” were the main responses. There was not one example of a service aimed at this, but the National Careers Service was quoted as a potential support mechanism, “but I think they mainly help with CVs.” “It’s worth noting, that our service providers, e.g. National Careers Service, are also not very good at supporting access to HE.” “They are too busy supporting the masses with CV writing and other tasks linked to finding a job.” (Rejecter: Resigned and Uninterested: Rejecter)

### **What would you like to see happen in this area?**

Most respondents did not think it was much of an issue, “as those offenders who can access university, should be able to do it with the same systems as when I went to uni” (Rejecter: Resigned and Uninterested: Resigned.) One of the sample had a slightly different opinion relating to finance and a stable family to support the offender to study. “For me I think the whole issue of funding for Higher Education is fundamental. We all know the impact of the fees for university and then you also



have got the living expenses to cover. If you have supportive parents happy to sell their house and support you financially, and most offenders are not going to have those networks of support, it makes the whole experience much less likely to succeed.” (Rejecter: Resigned and Unfulfilled: Finance)

### **How do you feel about the university application process?**

Most surveyed stated it is easy to use, based on their personal experiences of applying for university. Other comments are summarised as: “Rather than processes there are barriers. Offenders have to go before a panel, other students do not. I am sympathetic with colleges in the issues of safeguarding but can still see how offenders would see the university application process as barrier laden.” “If Probation applies on behalf of a client, you have to disclose, but if an offender applies direct and lies it might not get found out. We would always encourage the truth to be told, but the thought of being put before a panel is the ultimate barrier to an offender accessing university level education.” “There can also be clumsy decision making on college applications. I can understand a refusal on a medical course, but bricklaying? It is also worth mentioning that some colleges are not keen to engage with us.” “I’m aware of the Open University’s additional support for licenced offenders, but most of our offenders either want a college course or have other more urgent requirements to deal with. Our Offender Managers don’t have the time or knowhow to deal with supporting university applications.” “I can’t remember having a released prisoner who requested that they wanted help to continue with studying a degree they started in prison. I think most offenders in jail do OU courses to keep them occupied, in subject areas that entertain them. Subjects like law, criminology, teaching and psychology. You know the ones that they will never get a job in the sector due to their criminal record.” “It’s good that they are studying to degree level, but will it get them a job when they are released?” (Rejecter: Resigned)

Other interesting comments that emerged were: “The assumption is that offenders are poorly skilled, but you find sex offenders who might be teachers or highly qualified in IT. Their IT skills can be of a fantastic standard.” (Rejecter: Resigned) “There is a feeling that offenders are unemployable, quite often having issues around mental health and would never present well in an interview, no matter how many qualifications they get.” (Unfulfilled: Time limited)

It is clear that probation services do not generally support progression to HE and, from interviewing frontline staff, although well meaning, their priorities lie with short

term interventions to reduce re-offending. To support these findings, further evidence was sought from the analysis of OFSTED reports for the sampled probation areas and HMP Bedford. Generally, OFSTED criticised both probation and prison education delivery systems, with specific reference to the lack of diversity in provision and the focus on lower level attainment. HE was not mentioned in any of these reports.

According to OFSTED, no single probation trust/service or prison has received an “Outstanding” grade in an OFSTED inspection in the past three years, with 65% of these institutions receiving the “Requires Improvement” or “Inadequate” grade. “It is unacceptable that Ofsted judged only 35% of prisons good for their education and training provision. If these figures related to our schools there would be a national outcry” (OFSTED, 2013).

Generally probation staff were professional and seemed to care about their offender clients, but were resigned to the fact that most offenders are low ability and even if they wanted to go to university, funding, time and procedural barriers would hinder any offender accessing higher education. Reflecting on the TNS learner segment model categories, employees at probation could be seen to be in these categories also, but there was no trend identified that led to presumptions that attitudes are not linked to job role in the probation service, from the perspective of helping offenders to access higher education. Comments related to finance, confidence (or lack of) related to identifying support and time to support offenders, fell into the unfulfilled categories. There were comments linked to the rejecters categories related to lack of perceived requirement for the service due low offender interest and perceived academic ability. The comments toward time were very interesting as time was linked to other potential barriers that offenders may have linked to the seven pathways model. One other factor was the lack of positive attitudes towards widening participation and using education as a tool to reduce crime. As an interviewer it was interesting to notice that probation staff seemed to be less positive regarding general usefulness and the requirement for education, compared to that of the offender sample.

## **5.6 Summary of how Prisons support offenders to access higher education**

“Criminals can’t go unpunished, but young people who’ve made mistakes and committed crime can’t simply be left on the scrapheap.

If we expect them to turn their lives around, we have to put their time inside to good use.” Nick Clegg (MOJ, 2014)

These are the words of the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, regarding his feelings on the provision of offender education in the prison system. The document in question is titled: “Young criminals must be punished, but education is the cure”, giving the first acknowledgement of the importance of education in the rehabilitation process.

Education in a prison environment is primarily provided in order to reduce the risk of re-offending and to provide a good level of vocational skills, thus leading to an increased level of employability, but there is little mention of those prisoners who aspire to a university level education. When interviewing one prison governor, his comments on the role of education in the prison were of concern: “yes education is important, but so is giving inmates something to do. If education provision is cut much more in the prison, it may be just as effective giving them a PlayStation, to stop them burning the place to the ground.” This seems to indicate that there is a need to entertain inmates in prisons and that education is one way of doing it. The same governor did also mention the persistent issue of inmates being released and “coming back to jail within 12 months”. “Prison and education providers are doing what they can to help inmates find work upon release. They need something to belong to, and I suppose HE could be one solution. But HE is for the selected few, where most inmates want to something with their hands, not their minds.” “This is reflected in our education provision that is focused on basic skills and employability. The education providers do their best, but now funding is gone from Level 3 and degree courses, the uptake of inmates taking out student loans is a fraction of what it was previously.”

At HMP Bedford all prisoners wishing to apply for funding have to have already been sentenced and to have at least six months left to serve of their sentence. In a short-term prison such as Bedford, this excludes the majority of inmates. An interview with a member of the education team at HMP Bedford highlights some of these

difficulties. "All those wishing to apply for a course have to go through various checks within the Prison. Obviously, courses requiring access to the Internet etc. are not available (not even through the prison's virtual campus systems). In addition, funding has changed recently which makes it more difficult for prisoners to get financial assistance." She went on to say that once funding is received, further support is provided with "the department also providing a link between the distance learning tutor and the student." At this point it is useful to refer to the distance learning model for the East of England, which states that its aim is to "ensure that barriers or difficulties to distance learners are minimised." It goes on to break the distance-learning model down into four stages. It makes notable mention in stage three (facilitating learning) of the responsibility of HMPS to ensure that all learning materials are converted from an online format to a printed format and to arrange phone tutorials as the preferred option, therefore offering the maximum support to learners enrolled on a higher level education programme.

The first point stated in the NOMS instruction manual regarding "Open University and Distance Learning" is: "NOMS encourages establishments to provide prisoners with opportunities for HE and distance learning as an important contribution to their resettlement, as well as a way to assist prisoners with long term sentences to positively engage with regimes."

The document goes on to reinforce this further by stating that: "This instruction aims to ensure that OU, other HE and DL courses are available to prisoners identified as likely to benefit from such study in line with assessments, resettlement requirements and aspirations." The inclusion of the term "aspirations" is notable as it gives some acknowledgement that there are prisoners serving sentences who aim to achieve a higher level of educational accomplishment.

One gap in the provision sampled, and missing from NOMS' procedures, is that of supporting 'through the gates' study methods. This is for those learners mid study programme/qualification who are released into the community. In HMP Bedford there was no reference to the Open University's "Study After Prison" support programme (Open, 2008). "Once they are released they become a normal learner like you or me". As seen in the previous section, this is also the sampled probation staff position. This demonstrates that no matter how good a service is, once offenders are released into the community they are on their own, unless they encounter someone who is aware of what support is available. What is required is adequate training for frontline

staff; marketing of services to prison and community stakeholders and in custody education providers being an integral part of a prison's regime (e.g. they need to know when a learner is being released to be able to offer support).

In conclusion there was some interesting data emerged from the prison and probation stakeholder interviews, using the TNS categories to code responses and attitudes towards higher education support for offenders. Overall the data collected demonstrated positive intentions for generally supporting offenders towards a law abiding life. If higher education would help in this journey, all seemed to value this as a support option. Due to the perceived need of the masses, all probation and prison staff did not perceive the higher education was a viable route to support achieving reduction in crime targets and therefore was seen as a "potential waste of time and money. When the money could be spent on other more important educational outcomes, such as basic skills and supporting the employability agenda" (comment from Community Payback Manager). Below is a summary of the seven probation and prison service comments linked to the TNS categories.

## **5.7 Summary of how Universities support offenders to access higher education**

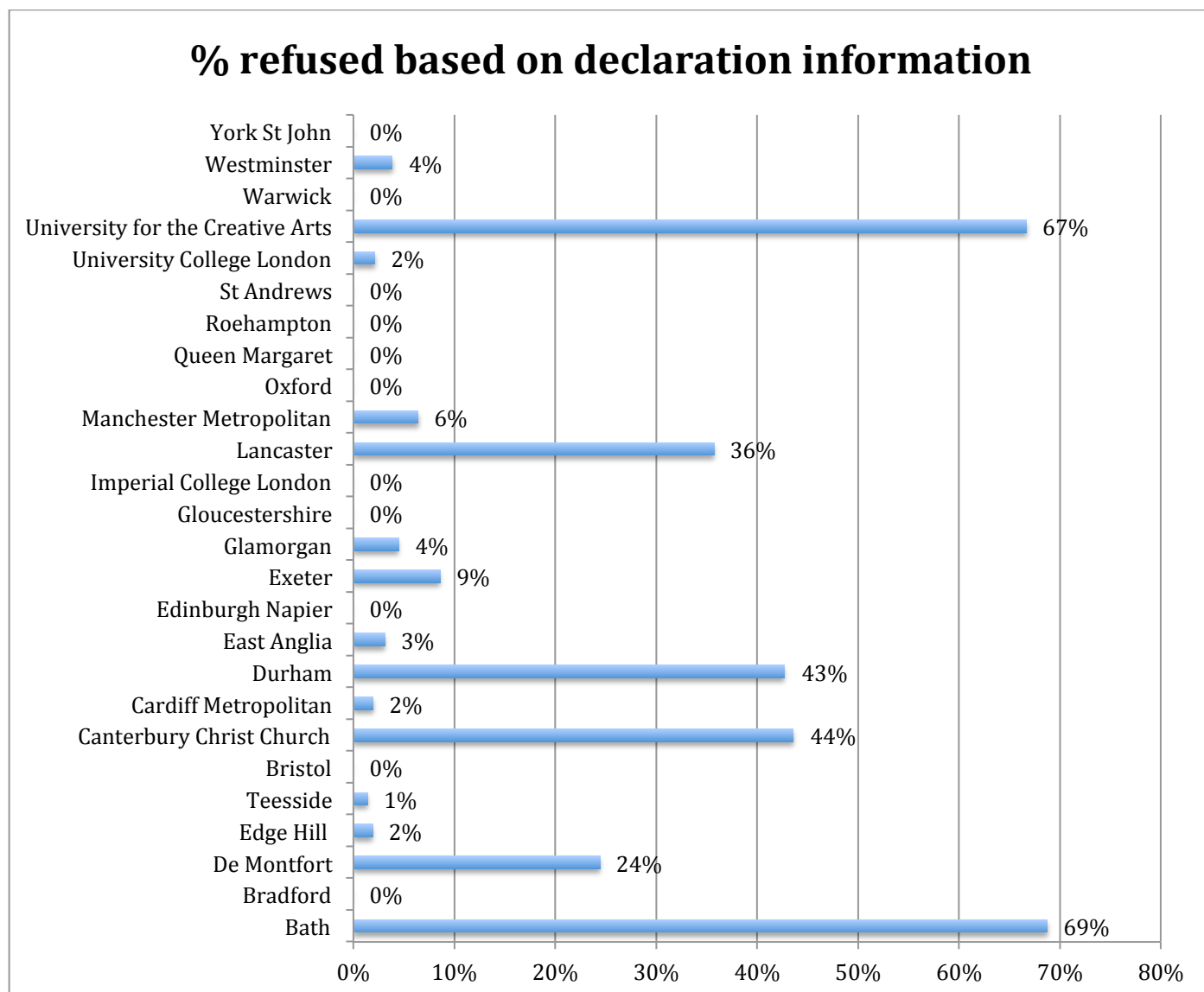
Having the opportunity to interview a range of university managers and one senior manager for the Open University, was an opportunity to gain access to both informed and fresh outlooks on supporting offenders to access HE. As part of the data collection process for this section, 40 universities were contacted, taken from the top 100 list of universities, 20 from the top and 20 from the bottom (TCUG, 2014). These universities were then asked to share offender related data on admissions, rejections and enrolments and asked how they integrate offenders into their widening participation agendas (appendix 3). Using NVivo, an analysis of these institutions' admissions policies, from the perspective of offenders, was then conducted, in order to assess levels of inclusion and potential barriers, which may be perceived by offenders.

### **5.7.1 Admissions Data**

During the initial data collection, many of the universities declined to share their data on offenders (39 out of 40). The researcher's thanks to Glamorgan is noted. As this data was essential to gain a picture of how universities support offenders, a freedom of information request (FOI) was sent to the 39 universities. After the FOI (see appendix 3) was submitted only one university did not reply, the University of

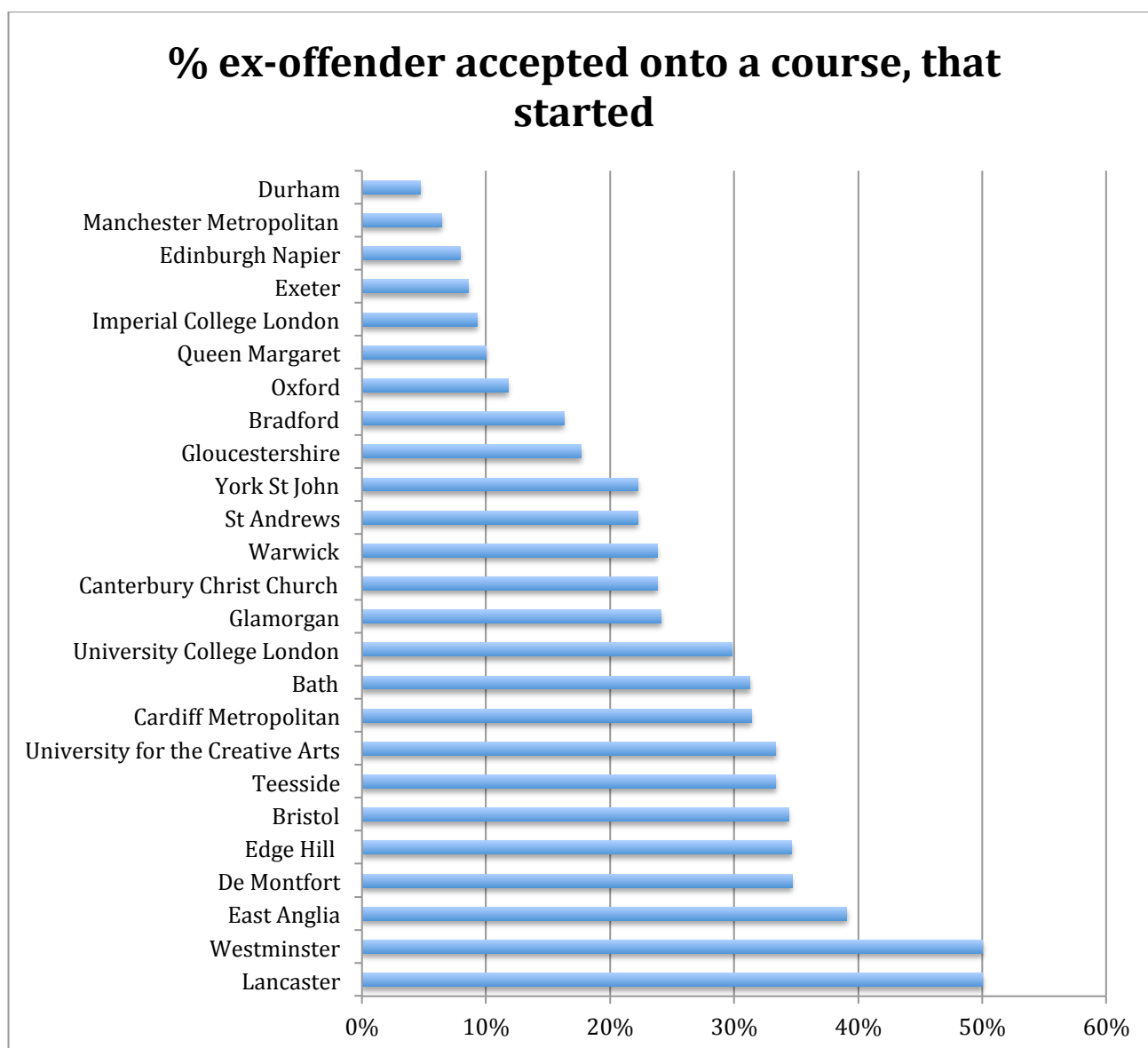
Southampton and one university refused to share the data based on assumed costs, the University of Birmingham. 38 universities cooperated to help to build a picture of how they supported offenders.

In total, in 2013, the sampled universities received 4,348 applications from prospective learners who declared an offence on their application. Comments from admissions departments regarding this should be taken into account, as they state that most declarations they receive should not have been declared. This is due to the nature of the offence e.g. driving or speeding. Although admissions departments could not put a figure on this, it should be noted. Of the 4,348 applications, only 233 were refused due to reasons linked to criminal offence, although 14 universities stated that they could not give this data as their systems did not record the reason why applications are refused. For those universities that declared data, this was a 10.1% decline rate linked to declared offences. The majority of universities stand out as inclusive from this data. Some show that they have a high decline rate, which may infer less inclusive practices. One university stated that they had not had any prospective learners apply within three years, who had declared an offence (Harper Adams University College).



**Figure 13: % refused based on declaration information**

Further analysis of the data provided showed that, in most universities, there was a high percentage of those students (ex-offenders) who received an offer, starting their course. In some universities this statistic showed very low uptake. Unfortunately, this factor was not anticipated in the design of the questions, so a rationale for this could not be reached based on available data.



**Figure 14: % ex-offender accepted onto a course that started**

Nine universities declared the 91 courses on which offenders enrolled. This was enlightening considering the presumptions that offenders may be drawn to occupations that may not require a criminal record check. The data showed an above average enrolment rate on caring, teaching and other occupations that would require a criminal record check (50.6%). This does reinforce data collected in one of the case studies, that offenders may be drawn to occupations that require them to help people who may be from similar backgrounds to them.

Only two universities stated that offender learners applying to study requested the accreditation of prior learning (APL). This indicates that successful applications were not attracted from ex-prison learners who studied through such routes as the Open



University. This is potentially worrying as those offenders in custody who do not complete their degree whilst incarcerated, may have a lower tendency to continue learning in the community. When the Open University was questioned on this matter, they stated that they do not know the level of credit transfer/APL from or to their degrees. The inclusive nature of the Open University, not requiring any offence data, will be discussed in the next section.

As ex-offenders are potentially vulnerable adults, as well as being a potential risk, it was presumed in the design of the questioning that universities may include offender statistics in their widening participation agendas. Unfortunately, none of the universities sampled uses offender statistics with regards to their widening participation agendas.

### ***5.7.2 How inclusive are university admissions policies?***

Before analysing the sampled universities' offender admissions policies using NVivo (if the university had one (University of Leicester published theirs in May 2014)), the offender sample was asked to read three admissions policies each. This was supported by a visual aid to highlight high frequency words, Wordle (Feinberg, 2013) – see appendix 4. From this a list of words and phrases was recorded as an indicator of potential “excluding factors” or “inclusive factors”. Excluding words were defined as those that identify offenders and may place additional barriers in the application process. Inclusive factors were those words that made the offenders think about “equality” during the application process. In addition to this, the offender sample also commented on other factors that would deter them from applying to a university, linked to: length of policy; type of language (e.g. legalistic was deemed as an excluding factor) and whether there was a standalone offender policy available on the web. For example, if they had to apply in order to view the policy, rather than it being part of a general admissions policy, it was seen as a excluding factor. An additional inclusive factor was related to the Open University's non-disclosure of offence policy, unless an offender was applying for a restricted profession e.g. nursing or teaching. On this single point, the University of Glamorgan's policy on disclosure of offences is that they do not require any disclosure, unless it is required by a specific course. Due to this, the following findings do not mention Glamorgan, as they do not have a general offender admissions policy.

**Table 7: Offender Perceptions: Inclusive and Excluding language relating to admission policies**

Inclusive Factors		Excluding Factors	
Mentor	Inclusive	Offender	Regulated
Declaration	University	Rehabilitation	Protect
Work	Degree	Conviction	Exclude
Diverse	Higher Education	Spent	Unlikely
Welcome	Applicant	Committee	Prison
Support	Information	DBS	Probation
	Admissions	CRB	Safeguarding
		Barring	Rehabilitation
		Unspent	Fitness to train
		Offence	Serving prisoner
		Criminal	Disclose
		Vulnerable	Disclosure

Using NVivo's word tree function, (see appendix 5 but note that some examples have been omitted due to inability to fit on the page), a sense check was used to see if the excluding words were linked to potential restrictive practices or to risk management not directly linked to the offender's own learning journey. This was deemed as linked to offender's feelings and perceptions. These inclusive and excluding factors/words did fit this criterion, so were included in the analysis. From a purely visual perspective, one can see that universities place a great deal of focus on checking if prospective learners have a criminal record, but do not explain the reasons why; nor do they discuss any additional services that may be available to offenders once they become students. This omission, in itself, is evidence of exclusive practices.

The lengths of the policies varied, with most universities opting for an appendix to their admission policy. For those universities that had standalone policies, the detail of these varied a great deal. Cambridge University's policy was identified by the offender sample as exclusive. This was interesting to observe, as this policy was very detailed, explained exactly what the process was and gave diagrams to explain the flow of the process. When challenged on this point, the offenders stated it was elitist. However, it is a university and one of the best ones in the world. This example was an anomaly, but more frequently comments were related to short policies that did not detail the process well or were sections of general admission policies. The Bradford University policy is only 50 words in total and De Montfort University's policy is a quarter of a page. None of these gave much detail and led the offenders to feel

that, because of the lack of information, they may be reluctant to apply to these universities due to the “risk of the unknown.” Having a standalone policy was expected to be the norm by the offenders, whereas, in reality, 14 out of the sampled universities had minimal reference to supporting offender application as part of their admissions policy. One university, De Montfort, had two paragraphs in their general student admissions policy, a reiterated version of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974). The policy then stated that applications would be evaluated on the basis of risk to safety and reputation, a single person being responsible for this decision, which was seen by the offender sample as “demonstrating that they don't want any offenders”:

***“Applicants disclosing criminal convictions***

*As part of its duty of care to the University community, staff and student population, the University asks applicants to disclose information about any relevant unspent criminal convictions.*

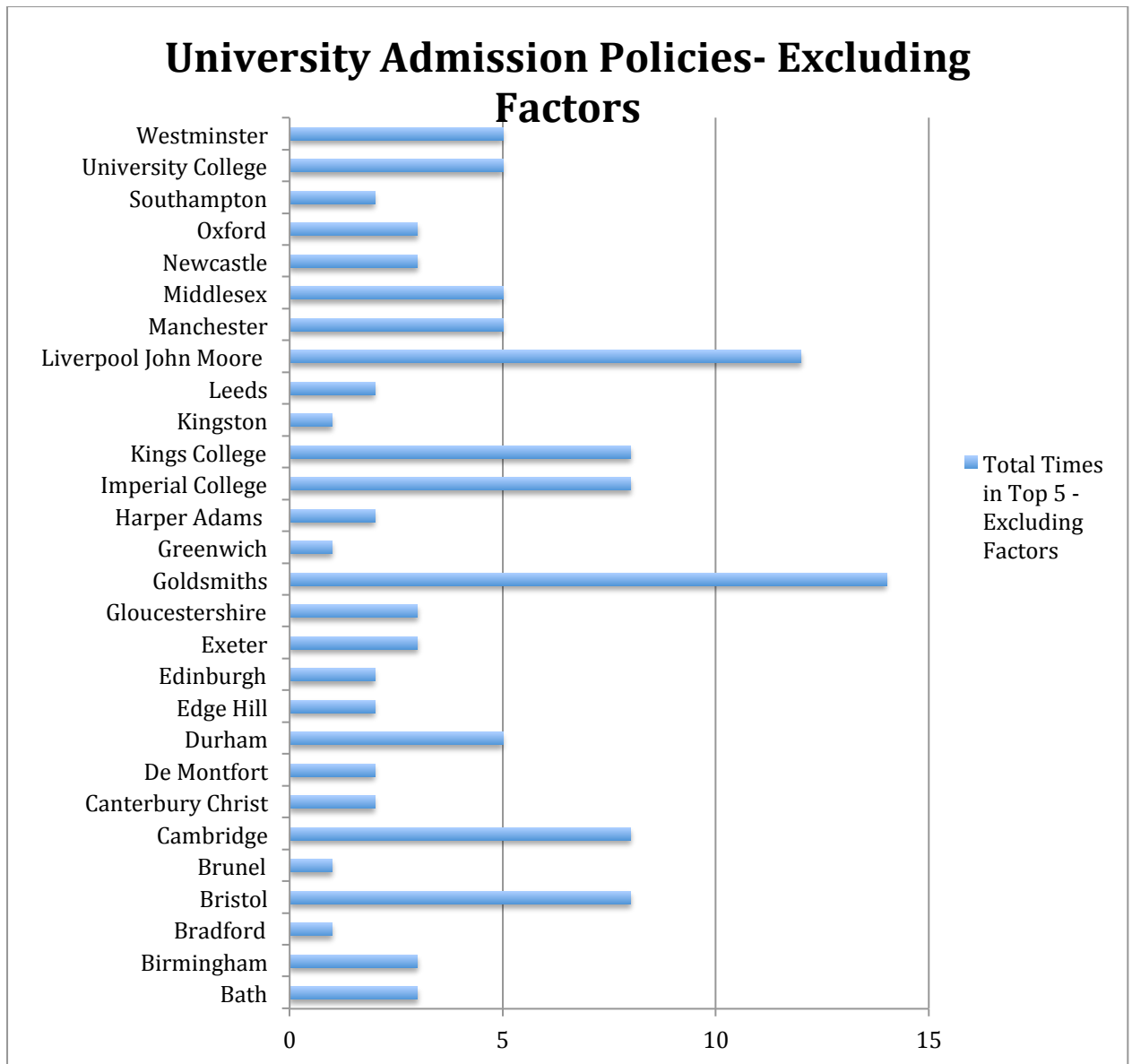
*Convictions with a sentence of 30 months or less will become spent after a certain period of time. This period is known as a ‘rehabilitation period’. Its length depends on how severe the penalty was. Further information about spent and unspent convictions can be found in the relevant section of the Home Office website or by contacting the Disclosure and Barring Service customer services.*

*All applicants, including those who have declared a criminal conviction, are considered entirely on an individual basis. When a criminal conviction is declared as part of the application process, an assessment of risk to the safety and/or reputation of the University and its community is carried out by the relevant Admissions Manager” (DMU, 2014)*

Before progressing onto the NVivo evaluation of the university policy documents, it should be noted that the results should be viewed with an air of caution. As mentioned above, many universities have either very short paragraphs on supporting offender admissions, as part of another document, or their policy is brief and lacking in detail. Those universities that pay attention to clarity of the process, through robust policies, write a lot and one of the perceived exclusion barriers was length of policy.

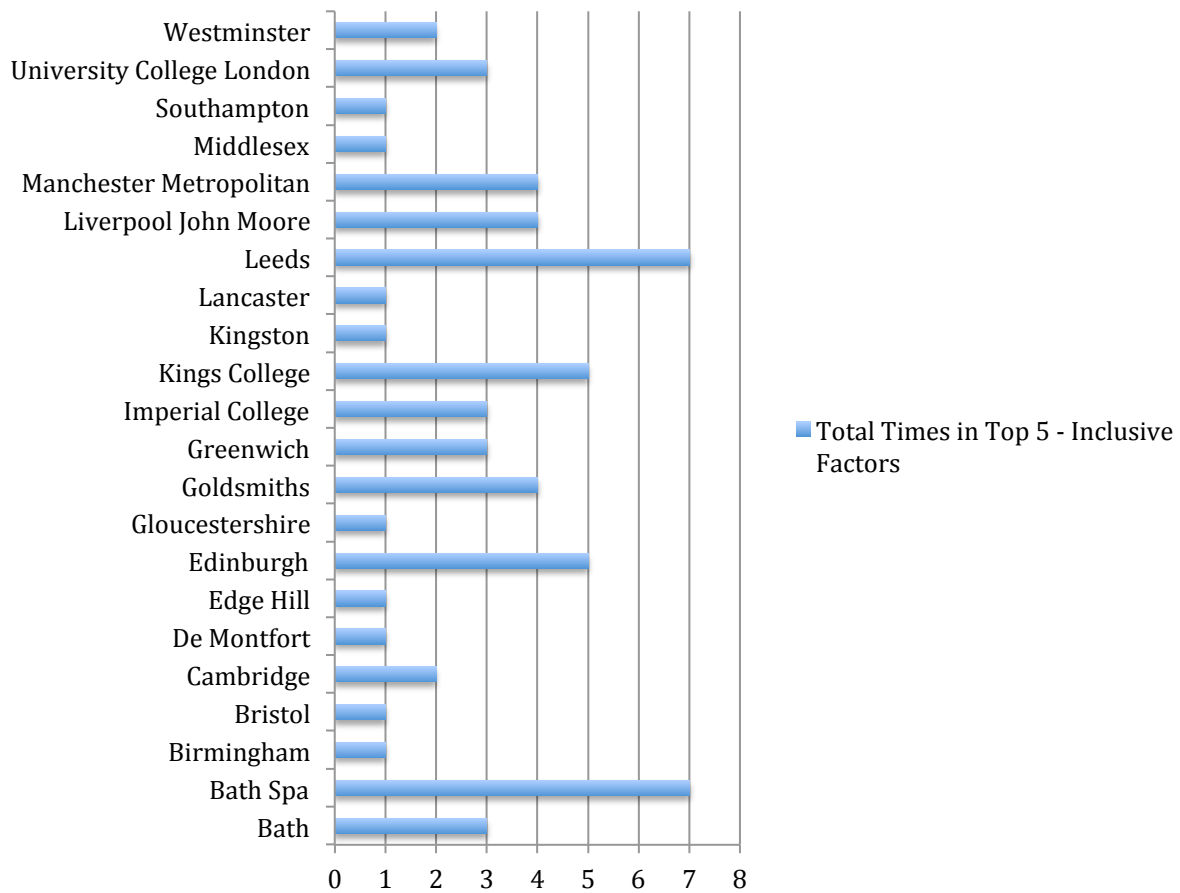
What is interesting about the data is where the text analysis of the policy documents, cross referenced with the levels of offenders who applied to university places, reinforces or negates the claims of inclusion or exclusion practices contained in policy documents. An example of this can be seen with Liverpool John Moores University with 542 applications from offenders in one academic year. This university appears in both inclusion and exclusion 'league tables', due to levels of the words identified by the offender sample and also they have an 18 page, 6,730 word policy on admissions for those with previous criminal convictions. This indicates that, although some offenders may not like long documents with offender related words; this does not deter offenders from applying to a university, which has a clear, well-written policy.

Unfortunately, some universities would not share their data, because of the cost implications and two universities gave data protection reasons. There was one exceptional piece of data that came through from Harper Adams University College: they did not have a single applicant apply for a course who declared a conviction. When asked if they use their offender data as part of their widening participation agenda, they stated, "We do not use this data in this way as there is none." Presumably, the university has never attracted ex-offenders. This may be down to the university's policies or its course mix or, more likely, the information is not available because of poor internal recording of learner data.



**Table 8: University Admission Policies - Excluding Factors**

## University Admission Policies - Inclusive Factors



**Table 9: University Admission Policies - Inclusive Factors**

**Table 10: Inclusive and Excluding factors: Admission policy comparisons**

Exclusion Factors: Highest scoring Universities	Number of Offenders Applied for Courses in 2013	Inclusion Factors: Highest scoring University	Number of Offenders Applied for Courses in 2013
Bath	16	Bath	16
Brunel	No data provided	Bath Spa	No data provided
Durham	171	Birmingham	No data provided
Harper Adams	0	Bristol	14
Edge Hill	211	Cambridge	15
Edinburgh	144	De Montfort	176
Gloucestershire	147	Edge Hill	211
Goldsmiths	No data provided	Edinburgh	144
Greenwich	387	Gloucestershire	147
Imperial College	43	Goldsmiths	No data provided
Leeds	No data provided	Greenwich	387
Liverpool John Moore's	542	Imperial College	43
Southampton	No data provided	King's College	No data provided
University College London	47	Kingston	241
Westminster	26	Lancaster	14
		Leeds	No data provided
		Liverpool John Moore's	542
		Manchester Metropolitan	218
		Middlesex	252
		Southampton	No data provided
		University College London	47
		Westminster	26

### ***5.7.3 Interview with the Open University***

An interview took place with the Assistant Director (AD) of Widening Access and Success Services at the Open University, exploring its delivery model. This gave insight into how a university could be truly inclusive, even when dealing with those with a criminal past.

The AD, coming from a previous role within a prison environment, gave an interesting perspective to the role of supporting hard to reach learners. This gave her a “sense of pride in the learners’ achievements”, as it was her aim to “ensure parity with other campus based universities”, offering high quality HE to all.

The concept of studying with the Open University lends itself well to the prison environment, as the approach is a modular one. The university has taken many steps to enhance its services further to adapt to the provision of HE in a custodial environment. A strong and clearly directed marketing department has evolved, with support mentors wearing corporate polo shirts in order to be clearly identifiable, and all printed literature is now branded for engaging with offenders in custody. This is to provide a cohesive “university experience to all learners, regardless of whether or not they are studying from a prison environment or within the community.” A reinforcement of this commitment to the provision of a university experience matching that of mainstream learners can be seen in an official graduation ceremony held each year for this group with “caps, gowns and a high level senior manager to deliver the awards”. This is unique within the area of prison education and something that the OU is particularly passionate about. The AD spoke of the need to “give the students the correct recognition of their studies, and also the opportunity for their families to share in their achievement.”

The inclusivity of the OU’s admissions policy proved a key point of the interview. It hinges on the fact that the university is not campus based, “meaning learners are not required to declare any previous convictions as part of the application process. This clearly opens up the application route and does indeed offer true parity.”

As part of the required learning for certain modules, attendance at a residential summer school is required. When asked about balancing the need for ensuring student safety and managing risk assessment in this environment, the answer was that no formal risk assessments are completed for those specific learners. Risk is managed in conjunction with probation, but, critically, only for those offenders on



licence. Once any licence period has expired then they become “just another learner.” “We do need to be aware of issues surrounding mental health, but it’s all about supporting learning.”

Interestingly, the course choices follow a “predictable pattern, with the emphasis being predominately on the Social Sciences and Law.” “Clearly there are subject areas that would be impossible to deliver in a custodial environment e.g. Chemistry and Biology, which would require access to laboratories.” This would appear to represent the only visible constraint experienced by the OU in the delivery of a university education.

A key area that the OU focuses on is the issue of funding and finance. The AD spoke at length regarding the need to “explode the myths surrounding student finance”. It has been reported that prisoners were unaware of their ability to apply for a student loan in exactly the same way as any other university student. “Previously, prisoners believed that money would be taken out of their prison wages in order to fund their learning”, therefore the OU began employing various ways of communicating their courses to the wider prison community. These include taking out page space in the leading newspaper dedicated to prisoners, “Inside Time,” thus advertising and educating the potential student population in the same way any mainstream university might seek to do.

A further important provision that has been introduced is a peer mentor scheme. Prisoners are selected to be offered training to become a peer mentor. “This gives them a purpose and sense of self-fulfilment.” It also replicates “Student Support Officers”, found in every university campus, and provides, not only support, but also encouragement for every learner. The OU works in partnership with the Prison Education Trust (PET), Steps to Success Scheme. This is a pre-graduate access course. “The OU has no entry requirements but this course is something that we advise as it’s a nice supportive introduction into research and academic writing.”

“The Department of Business Innovation and Skills gives a pot of money to PET, they then write a letter of application, PET refers to us and we take the learner on.” Offender learner coordinators go out and visit every prison, conducting skills workshops on a rolling schedule, and they provide special support before an assignment is due in. The OU is also in partnership with NOMS (National Offender Management Service), Ministry of Justice and DBiS, developing skills on virtual

campus courses. “It’s a secure virtual learning environment link to talk to tutors, like a walled garden.”

The desire for true parity appears to underpin the ethos behind the Open University’s provision of courses and additional vital support, with the desire to offer the offender learner access to the same experiences that are available to mainstream learners. The OU’s attitude towards not requiring declarations of offence or any criminal records checks, if students take modular routes (even in those professions that require these checks) is commendable and promotes equality of access. (Note: when applying for full degree programmes in protected professions, checks are carried out as in the rest of the sector). A key point here for the Open University, regarding community-based offenders, is that offenders not on licence (over 60% of current community based offenders) do not have the option to go through the enhanced support system that is given to those on licence. An offender on licence is normally a serious, prolific or high-risk offender. With the majority of offenders being classed as “just another learner”, this group may be left to their own devices in a probation system that is not designed to support progression to HE. This has further potential negative impact on the continuation of study once in the community. To gain access to enhanced support from the OU, application for on-going support is made whilst in prison (Open, 2008). Although this support seems well structured, as evidenced in the prison and probation section of this thesis, there seem to be further requirements for awareness raising about this vital continuation service.

## **5.8 Potential business models for the Offender to U**

For this section of research, six charities were interviewed regarding their business delivery models (see appendix 6). Each business was asked about its: structure, governance and management; an overview of funding models; risks to business and targeted benefits to offenders. This structure was chosen after reflection on the corporate university model put forward by Wheeler (2005), highlighted as part of the literature review.

### **5.8.1 Structure, Governance and Management**

The varied sample ensured that there was a selection of models used. The aim here was to gain insight into newly established charities, through to those that have been operating for many years (a range of 223 years). A second aspect here was to

understand how these companies manage their businesses, business activity delivery and staffing structures.

Company Name	Years Established	Geographic Coverage	No of Employees	No of Volunteers	% of Volunteer to Paid Staff
Addaction	47	UK Wide	1094	250	22.85%
Trailblazers Mentoring LTD - TA "Trailblazers"	15	UK Wide	7	0	0.00%
Nacro	54	England and Wales	868	120	13.82%
Clinks	21	UK Wide	12	0	0.00%
Catch 22	226	England and Wales	906	1000	110.38%
Bounce Back Foundation	3	London	6	40	666.67%

**Table 11: Offender support charities comparison table**

The newer of the businesses have a minimal flatter management structure and reach the minimum requirements of the Charity Commission for governance structures. These organisations seemed to have been recently set up by a key person, or small group, with specific beneficiary groups being targeted e.g. the Bounce Back Foundation supported offenders recently released from prison to become self-employed painters and decorators. The painting and decorating work was the main income for the company, along with donations. Trailblazer, not a new business, has maintained its small business structure with the CEO's mobile phone number being published on the company website and on the company answerphone. The larger organisations have developed into large corporations, with management and governance structures that you would expect in a FTSE 100 company. These are detailed in appendix 6, but do not warrant much comment here as the requirements of governance of a charity are well documented (Charity-Commission, 2013).

Staffing structures are key to any business, especially where delivering services to generate income to then be re-invested in charitable work. Two of the smaller organisations did not use volunteers at all, but all others did. Catch 22, the largest company in the sample, has volunteers at the centre of its business model. This enables services to be delivered in prisons and community groups, facilitated by paid staff. There is a mix of volunteers from the community, dominated by retirees and university students, with ex-service users who are trained to be mentors in custody. Bounce Back use a “rolling stock” of around 40 volunteer offenders, recently released from prison. This is more of a short-term work placement to gain experience and qualifications whilst waiting to become self-employed as a painter and decorator. According to Bounce Back; “without our volunteers we would not have much income to do anything.” “When the volunteers become self-employed, we still work with them on a commercial basis to continue the mentoring support in the community.”

Management structures also varied, from one central person doing everything managerial (finance, project management, tender writing and so on) to larger organisations with formal management structures and clearly defined roles. The majority of costs for the smaller organisations were found to be linked to staffing the delivery of services. Trailblazer and Bounce Back had expenditure above their turnover. This is to be expected with a new venture such as Bounce Back. This factor should be taken into account in any feasibility study and business plan when starting a new venture.

### ***5.8.2 Overview of funding models***

Through an examination of financial information contained in the organisations’ annual financial returns for 2012 and from talking with frontline staff, a trend for developing charities’ business development plans was noted. Fledgling businesses, such as Bounce Back, use a method of generating revenue to support benevolent activity, as seen in their painting and decorating business. Fund raising is then added to this mix. All companies sampled explained how they either relied on or plan to gain access to government funds. The majority of those who have had government funds, had moved away from their original model of income generation. “Bounce Back’s aim is to access government funding next year”. Nacro highlighted the “biggest threat and opportunity over the next few years, is the change to government funding of payment by results contracts.” Nacro’s £47m annual turnover is from the delivery of government-funded contracts, with zero fundraising activity, whereas Nacro started

out housing offenders released from prison. This is still a major part of their business, but now it is all government grant funded. An anomaly to the data can be seen with Catch 22, who have large donations and an enviable investment portfolio with historical development of these assets over the past 200 years.

Company Name	Funds raised from traditional fundraising	Income: Charitable Activities (including government grants and tenders)	Total Turnover in 2012	% of turnover from traditional fundraising	Spending: Charitable Activities - including delivering government contracts	Spending: Income Generation and Governance	Turnover vs. Charitable Activity	Turnover vs. Spending on Income Generation and Governance
Addaction	£3,470,000	£47,200,000	£50,960,000	6.81%	£49,520,000	£940,000	97.17%	1.84%
TRAILBLAZERS MENTORING LTD - TA "Trailblazers"	£4,934	£436,812	£441,746	1.12%	£473,681	£5,890	107.23%	1.33%
Nacro	£0	£46,310,000	£47,470,000	0.00%	£47,090,000	£0	99.20%	0.00%
Clinks	£200,000	£1,780,000	£2,070,000	9.66%	£2,010,000	£10,000	97.10%	0.48%
Catch 22	£13,990,000	£38,840,000	£53,400,000	26.20%	£53,840,000	£0	100.82%	0.00%
Bounce Back Foundation	£129,850	£0	£156,647	82.89%	£179,774	£0	114.76%	0.00%

**Table 12: Offender Support Charities Financial Comparisons**

### **5.8.3 Risks to business**

From speaking to the sampled organisations' staff, and from analysing publicly available documents, there seems to be a trend related to the perceived risk concerns that differentiate the smaller charities from the larger, more established ones. For the smaller charities, Bounce Back and Clinks, the primary concern was that their longer term funding model was too reliant on their existing funding model. Bounce Back stated they "could do more with the assistance of government contracts" and that "without more donation or securing government contracts, we may struggle to survive." Trailblazer expressed concern over the growing trend it has seen recently in government contracts being regionally based, enabling only the larger organisations to be viable and to be "legitimate in tendering." The need for government contracts identified by these organisations has a number of implications. It seems to indicate that the smaller organisations aspire to the models of the larger organisations. However, with central government cutbacks in the way procurement is managed, these smaller organisations will either have to improve their cash

generation from traditional sources, or partner with larger organisations of contract delivery, forfeiting a management fee to their new prime contractor, of up to 40%.

There is a greater emphasis from government on “Payment by Results” contracts, especially in welfare to work and offender related contracts. This, in essence, means that organisations will require upfront funding to mobilise and deliver any new contracts. Smaller organisations may be disadvantaged by this type of model due to cash flow shortages. Unexpectedly, only the larger organisations commented on the risk attached to payment by results contracts (Addaction, Nacro and Catch 22). Catch 22 stated that they “took careful consideration of taking on new contracts” as some “were more risky than others” and, although these contracts were to help the beneficiaries, they “may be toxic” and too high risk for them to consider.

All organisations commented on the need to diversify funding streams, with a clear divide of trajectory between the smaller and larger organisations. For the larger organisations their comments were primarily based around the risks and opportunities that public sector cuts bring. Particular emphasis was placed on the “Transforming Rehabilitation” agenda, where large sections of the probation and prison service are being privatised. Catch 22 expressed concerns over the trend in losing funding due to local and central government cuts, whereas Nacro viewed this as more of an opportunity, probably due to this not representing as high a proportion of their business in this area as Catch 22. Nacro spoke of the need to “now diversify beyond our traditional criminal justice” areas and focus on “available funding”. “We are a business that needs cash flow. Without traditional charitable donations, Nacro is reliant on government contracts, just like a for profit organisation.” For the smaller organisations, diversification plans were primarily focused on aspiring to secure either more government funding, not commenting on any target areas, or, in the case of Bounce Back, their first government funding contract. This was seen as “what successful offender charities do to help the offenders back to work.”

Overall, the risks identified were linked to these organisations’ plans for revenue generation. The trend with this small sample of organisations seems to be that the smaller organisations start generating funding from a business idea linked to a trade or specialism. This then leads them to want to grow where they see government contracts as a quick growth mechanism. Once this quick money is secured, they see this as quicker and somewhat easier than generating funding through activities such as painting and decorating. Once sustainable government funding is secured, the

traditional funding methods reduce and, as seen in Nacro, they may even stop fundraising altogether. The exception is Catch 22, where they hold historical assets, have a mix of contracts and continue with fund raising. The Catch 22 model of spreading risk seems to be more preferable, especially in the context of reduced funding, payment by results and where smaller, local organisations seem to be forced to sub-contract delivery and pay management fees, due to the regional nature of contracts.

#### **5.8.4 Targeted Benefits to Offenders**

Due to the complex nature of supporting offenders to rehabilitate, in the majority of organisations the seven pathways model is followed, by design or through necessity (Sampson and Laub, 1993). This is illustrated in table 13.

**Table 13: How organisations help offenders - based on seven pathways model (Sampson and Laub, 1993).**

Pathway ->	Housing	General Health	Alcohol / Drug Dependence	Money / Debt	Relationships	Education	Employment
Addaction	Refer out	Refer out	Yes	Refer out	Refer out	Refer out	Refer out
Trailblazer	Yes	Refer out	Refer out	Refer out	Self confidence	Linked to employment only	Aim to secure job on release
Nacro	Yes	Refer out	Yes	Refer out	Refer out	Linked to employment & basic skills	Offender and non-offender
Clinks	Refer out	Refer out	Refer out	Refer out	Individuals and families of offenders	Community programmes to reduce offending	Refer out
Catch 22	Yes	Refer out	Refer out	Refer out	Community programmes to reduce offending	Community programmes to reduce offending	
Bounce Back	Probation coordinate	Probation coordinate	Probation coordinate	Probation coordinate	Probation coordinate	Employment linked	Self employment in painting and decorating only

The majority of organisations have established referral agreements in place for services that are potentially required by offender clients, but are not delivered by the host organisation. In the smallest organisation, Bounce Back, their niche project seems to be heavily supported by probation services, who coordinate additional services if required, leaving Bounce Back to focus on their core work.

What is obvious from speaking to these organisations is the need to ensure that offenders have access to services quickly. This is due to their potentially chaotic lifestyle, where a breakdown in one of the pathways, e.g. housing, will have a detrimental effect on other pathways. This will need to be factored into any model that supports offenders. When planning a support model to aid progression to HE, it must be recognised that this progression could be a long journey and therefore it will be essential that services be identified for the entire educational journey of the offender. As these services are normally funded on a one to five year cycle, it is also essential that the availability of mapped services is kept up to date and key contact points for referrals are maintained, as speed of referral has been identified as a key priority.

The following section takes this and previous chapters key messages and findings and further explores recommendations linked to the central research question and recommends specific points that could inform policy, practice and adds to the literature in this underdeveloped area of offender and higher education.



## **Chapter 6: Recommendations**

Throughout the thesis there has been reference to various stakeholders in education, the offenders themselves, policy makers and organisations that potentially support offenders to access higher education (e.g. Probation, Prisons, Education Providers, Universities and the organisations referred to in the case studies). In this chapter there are detailed recommendations, linked to justification evidence found in this research. The recommendations detailed here are primarily aimed at stakeholders (including those organisations that support offenders), education providers, policy makers and probation and prison services. For these key messages to reach most offenders, there is a lot of work to do with changing the way funding and policy is focused. The aim of the following recommendations is to inform policy and stimulate further discussion with the stakeholder groups that influence offender education (FE and HE), advice and guidance and probation and prison policy and targets.

### **Recommendation 1: Offenders are to be supported to access and complete GCSEs and A Levels**

Evidenced through the literature review and interviews with support staff from probation, prisons and offender education support staff it is evident that a focus is placed on low skills attainment and short courses. Offenders on probation are offered a limited range of courses primarily at lower levels. With regards to Maths and English this has historically been awards aimed at adults and the equivalent to GCSE's. These qualifications are not as demanding as GCSEs and do not prepare adults for higher-level learning (Wolf 2011). Recently, this situation has worsened through the demise of these awards in favour of adult functional skills<sup>1</sup>. Although these seem to be no more demanding, the programmes are longer. This has resulted in fewer offenders taking these qualifications. The key recommendation here is that offenders should be supported to progress to and attain GCSE qualifications, not equivalents. Where vocational qualifications are available, there should be obvious progression routes made available to offenders to higher level qualifications to support progression and the development of skills that are required in industry at level 3 and above.

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<sup>1</sup> See page 58

**Recommendation 2: Target probation and prison services (not only the education providers) to support offender education to higher-level qualifications**

Added value, distance travelled and qualifications at all levels appropriate to attainment levels of offenders, should be supported by probation and prison services. There should be an acknowledgement that payment by results contracts are here to stay for the foreseeable future (Wright, 2013). Therefore, probation services and providers of education should be set financial key targets related to value added, supporting learners beyond their current level of ability and distance travelled during their educational journey. This recommendation is linked to Wolf's (2011) recommendations for schools and the lack of education and progression targets evidenced in the probation and prison case studies in this thesis.

**Recommendation 3: Probation services recording systems should be used to track educational progression and attainment**

During the initial research phase, it was difficult to access data on attainment levels for offenders. Probation staff held perceptions of offender education needs that were not a reflection of actual data collect from offenders on community licences. This highlights issues around perception of levels of support required, tracking and potentially signposting to relevant education provision. Example; if probation services do not know what support offenders need, they cannot plan adequate support. Currently, offender attainment levels are recorded at induction and any qualifications gained thereafter are also recorded. It was evident from the research that this data is not analysed, disseminated or used to improve services to offenders. As the data is recorded, an adjustment to the probation MI systems is recommended to support the previous recommendation. This would provide a sound evidence base for targeted improvement in tracking, support and provision to facilitate progression to higher levels of learning.

**Recommendation 4: Design an inclusive education system for probation services, including access to traditional GCSEs and A Levels**

The current education system seen in the community is a 'one size fits all' and is aimed at lower level attainment and employment support. As seen through literature review, this system is inadequate in supporting the needs of offenders that have abilities above Level 1. There is a lack of current provision for Maths and English skills due to the recent shift towards functional skills, which has caused a further gap

in provision <sup>2</sup>. Education should be used as a mandatory element of rehabilitation of offenders, with GCSE grade A to C being a required minimum pathway and A Levels being readily available. Equivalent qualifications should not be used due to their poor development of academic abilities and inconsistencies in recognition of these qualifications by higher education institutions <sup>3</sup>.

**Recommendation 5: Acknowledge the academic needs of offenders at all levels; entry level to postgraduate**

Through interviewing probation staff it is evident that if probation staff want to refer to higher-level education provision, it is not available, not a priority and not a target. The current practice in probation services is to not support higher level learning, as the perception of offenders at higher levels of education is that they are more capable and should support themselves <sup>4</sup>. This potentially disadvantages these offenders as they may require additional support <sup>5</sup>. This need should be met by probation services and therefore should become a measurable mandated target for probation services. Probation staff should be trained to support the referral process to Higher Education, potentially changing the perception that standard admissions processes are enough for all offenders.

**Recommendation 6: Individualised learning to be a priority with a more diverse mix of education providers**

Following on from the recommendations of Rose (1999), the needs of offenders should be supported by a more diverse mix of education provision, than currently support offender education in the community. This will potentially support better educational experiences (Coffield et al., 2007, Thomas, 2001) and encourage congruent learning trajectories for offenders (Gorard et al., 1998a). This will allow education provided to be matched to the needs of the offenders, instead of offenders being matched to available education. Lack of this type of provision was evidenced during interviews with prison and probation staff. This additional education could be delivered by HEI's, with the added benefit of exposing offenders to HE providers through alternative educational routes. Supporting the development of academic and personal skills to enable offenders to apply to and succeed at university is essential. If these skills were supported by a local university, there would be possible additional

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<sup>2</sup> See page 56 and 58

<sup>3</sup> See page 57

<sup>4</sup> See page 134

<sup>5</sup> See pages 18 and 58

benefits gained from exposure to an HE provider linked to health, wealth and social mobility. If lower level skills were delivered by a university, progression aspirations may increase and be easier to support. This delivery should also include some lower level skills development in academic and employability areas.

Additionally, for those offenders who require support to progress to HE, probation staff should be able to support high level advice and guidance regarding appropriate referrals to support services.

**Recommendation 7: Individual offenders should be able to apply for OLASS funding to support specific educational needs**

OLASS is the offender education funding that is available in the UK, predominantly focused on prisons. Where existing education provision is not adequate to support a specific need of an offender, that offender should be given the option to use available OLASS funding elsewhere. This will maximise choice for offender development and support relevant learning trajectories. According to prison education staff, lower level education is a priority and therefore affects the availability of higher-level education. During the probation staff interviews, maths and English were the only priorities outside of employment support. All community-based education was funded through local FE providers, with probation services only sourcing lower level education.

**Recommendation 8: Encourage offenders to study towards careers that they will be able to work in**

It has been evidenced that a large proportion of HE learning for offenders is linked to professions that these offenders will have difficulties working in professionally: Law, Teaching, Health and so on <sup>6</sup>. Difficulties will be encountered because of the nature of their prior offence(s) and criminal record checks prior to employment. Financial support should be limited to educational development that is directly linked to future potential employment. An education mentor should be allocated to each offender for their learning journey whilst under the care of probation services, as seen in the Open Universities offender support model<sup>7</sup>. This single point of contact should support progression to higher levels of education and transfers to other education providers. Where universal advice and guidance services are available in the community and universities, such as the National Careers Service, offender advisors

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<sup>6</sup> See page 135

<sup>7</sup> See page 137

should be suitably trained to support all potential progression routes in employment and education, including higher education.

#### **Recommendation 9: Better access to 24+ loans**

There is a general perception that offenders are less willing to pay for education and therefore that offender education should be free at the point of access, or risk low uptake<sup>8</sup>. This perception restricts potential access to Level 3 and above skills as part of offender education support, especially where education journeys at higher levels are traditionally longer. Offenders may complete a probation order mid education journey and will require support to complete the journey. Evidence of this type of systematic support was not identified<sup>9</sup> and potentially could cause offenders not to complete degree programmes. Using traditional funding routes may support longevity of learning and achievement and should therefore be promoted to all offenders as part of on-going advice, guidance and support.

#### **Recommendation 10: Encourage the use of Accredited Prior Learning (APL) in prisons and probation**

There is evidence found in the admissions data from the universities sampled to support the opinion that APL is not widely supported<sup>10</sup>. Raising awareness of credit transfer may support offenders to complete degree programmes, and other lower level programmes, once they have completed a prison sentence and/or probation order (Howard, 1993, Butterworth, 1992). This could be achieved through better training of front line staff and planning of data capture/analysis of offender prior attainment data.

#### **Recommendation 11: Probation services should celebrate offender education achievements and aspire to be seen as developmental organisations**

Through the analysis of recent probation service OFSTED reports, there is evidence that education is not generally seen as essential for the rehabilitation of offenders. There has not been any probation service or prison in the UK that has scored outstanding in an OFSTED inspection in the last three years. 65% have scored the grade requires improvement or inadequate. Setting clear educational targets for probation services would make education core to its delivery. Without these targets,

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<sup>8</sup> See pages 24 and 135

<sup>9</sup> See page 31

<sup>10</sup> See page 139

probation services are unlikely to broaden their focus. Probation services should also put in place systems for celebrating educational success, e.g. awards ceremonies.

**Recommendation 12: Those probation areas and education providers that score “Requires Improvement” or “Inadequate” should be supported by government to improve education support to offenders**

Through the analysis of OFSTED reports, prisons and probation services education provision is at best satisfactory and requires improvement. This should not be accepted and better management from funding and quality bodies is required to support high quality education that supports progression to high levels of education.

**Recommendation 13: Personal tutors should be allocated to support offender learning through the time in prison and/or on probation licence**

Probation officers are not required to support on-going or complex education needs<sup>11</sup>. Prison education has dedicated education provision that is funded<sup>12</sup>. Although this is referred to as only satisfactory, at least there is dedicated provision to be improved. Probation services rely on mainstream education providers who may not have specific offender support experience. For offenders on probation, the allocation of a single point of contact to support education would support retention, progression and achievement, working with probation officers to include education as part of rehabilitation plans. Additionally this person could support applications to HE and ensure that any APL claims were supported correctly (Howard, 1993).

**Recommendation 14: All UK Higher Education Institutions should be mandated to follow nationally agreed offender admissions processes**

There are variances in the quality, clarity, length and accessibility of university admissions policies regarding offender applicants evidenced in the analysis of 40 UK admissions policies carried out in this research<sup>13</sup>. A national standard would ensure that universities across the UK follow fair and transparent admissions processes. This would also support offenders in their applications, as all universities would manage admissions in the same way. Offenders and probation staff have indicated that they would like equality of application with non-offender applicants<sup>14</sup>, but this is unreasonable when universities are required to manage risk. However, consistency

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<sup>11</sup> See page 135

<sup>12</sup> See page 138

<sup>13</sup> See page 142

<sup>14</sup> See page 142

would help to remove some perceived and actual barriers linked to inconsistency of information.

### **Recommendation 15: Universities should manage risk with regards to offender applications**

It is clear from the analysis of university admissions processes<sup>15</sup>, that not all universities have clear procedures for managing offender applications. Examples of risk assessments measuring perceived risks to safety and reputation are diametrically different types of risk, but most universities seem not to differentiate between them<sup>16</sup>. This assessment of intangible information and the “risk of the unknown”<sup>17</sup> is sometimes the responsibility of one person, a committee or, in limited cases, only taken into account with restricted professions e.g. teaching and healthcare. It is recommended that risk management should be improved through robust application processes for all universities, supporting offender applications, a safer learning environment and potentially resulting in increased levels of offenders progressing to university. University application processes that are vague were seen as a reason not to apply to a university, as the fear of the unknown is sometimes the biggest barrier to offenders<sup>18</sup>.

### **Recommendation 16: Alternative sources of funding are required to support offenders to Higher Education**

With shrinking education resources, focusing more tightly on groups deemed as priority by government, offenders who seek support to access HE risk being further marginalised. Separate, sustainable funding support is required to support this type of activity: funding that is not subject to cyclical funding issues as seen with ESF funding. Therefore, it may fall to private benevolent organisations and/or charities to support this through traditional charity business models or one similar to the corporate university model presented in this thesis.

At the beginning of this study the aims were to contribute to the policy debate in community based offender education in the UK, to explore alternative delivery and funding models and to encourage and support offenders in and to Higher Education. So far we have explored these areas through the literature review, research and

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<sup>15</sup> See page 142

<sup>16</sup> See page 143

<sup>17</sup> See page 144

<sup>18</sup> See page 142

have discovered a range of fascinating perspectives from primary and secondary data. The next chapter summarises these points linked to the central research questions.

## **Chapter 7: Summary and Conclusions**

Before embarking on this research, the idea of creating an organisation designed to help offenders, staffed by offenders seemed an altruistic and credible concept. The DBA programme, and this thesis, has helped to develop research supporting the development of professional practice, informing policy, whilst adding to the under developed knowledge in this area of education. Throughout this research, from literature review to analysis of results, the emerging theme has been that a few benevolent entrepreneurs establish charitable organisations targeted at what they see as priorities at the time of inception. These businesses quickly become reliant on government contracts as they increase in size and, in some cases, they lose sight of their original established aims and become caught up in the corporate objectives of increasing cash flow and making a profit. This influenced the central research question to this thesis of “How do you design a community based offender education model that incorporates support to access Higher Education?”

The initial concept of using corporate university principles has been seen in those organisations newly established e.g. Bounce Back, where the organisation generates revenue from the skills that it teaches to its beneficiaries, which is then used to deliver services to local communities. In larger organisations there is limited evidence to show that this approach is continued, except where organisations have high levels of volunteers delivering services. The use of volunteers, some of whom were users of the service, shows that the corporate university concepts develop the long-term aims of improving skills and employability levels of service users and also help the organisation gain access to reduced cost delivery of services. This, in turn, helps organisations to deliver services in the new ‘more for less’ and ‘payment by results’ culture described in the previous chapter.

The values of the organisations delivering the O2U project would need to be clearly defined in respect of: the value of teaching and learning; return on investment; support for the O2U from outside organisations and the on-going commitment to the original goals of the organisation.



## **7.1 The value of teaching and learning**

The current support targeted at the learning needs of offenders is inadequate to support offenders who could progress to HE. With the overarching focus on basic skills development and employment support for offenders, the minority group of higher ability offenders is being ignored. There are examples of pockets of support that is available, but probation and prison services are not equipped with the knowledge of these schemes and this disadvantages those offenders who may require these services.

Higher ability offenders will be further marginalised as a result of: shrinking resources in probation services and prisons; the evolution of the Transforming Rehabilitation agenda; the resulting privatisation of probation departments into 'payment by results' delivery.

Access to traditional academic qualifications, e.g. GCSEs, A Levels, foundation degrees and pre-university courses, is essential for offenders to be prepared for entry into HE. Any O2U type service will need to ensure that it refers to or delivers these services as part of its preparatory model.

The other aspect of the 'value of learning' is linked to the skills that the O2U provider will need to maintain its business. The common model seen in the case studies was a core of paid staff, from varied backgrounds, with the support of volunteers. This model seems to work well with newly established businesses just as it does with the more established. Upon reflection on the interviews with the offenders, this model may also fit well with the short term goals of the offenders sampled, who were focused on an end goal, of potentially going to university, not focused on how they got there. They showed an overreliance on someone other than themselves taking ownership for acquiring support for achieving their goal. The corporate university model described in this thesis may suit this. Volunteers would gain access to development to prepare for progression to HE. During this time they would also deliver services on behalf of the O2U organisation and generate revenue. This type of model would see short-term turnover of volunteers, but may be suited to supporting this type of beneficiary.

## **7.2 Return on investment**

Return on investment is seen in two ways: maintaining working capital to keep the business running and investment being spent on the beneficiary group. This latter investment would be linked to their development to go to university and supporting the offenders to progress and achieve the overarching goal of degree attainment and employment.

Through the case studies on potential business models return on investment has been achieved in different ways. In those organisations that fundraise and/or deliver commercial activities to generate revenue to support the aims of the charity, there is evidence that activities are being supported directly through revenue generation. In organisations such as Nacro, they have focused their acquisition of government funding on their core beneficiary group to enable them to deliver services in line with the charity's overall aims. Noted here is a recent shift in this ethos, where the organisation is now delivering non-related services for the purpose of funding generation, with little evidence that this activity supports anything other than the sustainability of the organisation itself.

For the O2U model, this return on investment will be key to its survival and the success of its beneficiaries.

## **7.3 Support for the O2U from outside organisations**

What is clearly evidenced through the literature and this research is the need for the O2U organisation to be structured to deliver its core outcomes, alongside and, potentially in partnership with, other organisations that support offenders. The commonly used pathways model is recommended here, as it identifies areas of support and would facilitate the identification of potential referral partners.

This approach would help to mitigate against the negative perceptions held by probation workers about HE progression support required by offenders. Offenders have complex requirements they tend to be affected by changes in pathways that may impact on education participation. For example, offenders are more likely to have come into contact with drugs and having support for this may reduce the likelihood of the offender starting back on drugs during a university study programme.

Maintaining links with these support organisations will be essential, as the availability of services may fluctuate and referral points of contact may change, which will, in turn, affect the speed and reliability of referring offenders to support services.

#### **7.4 On-going commitment to the original goals of the organisation**

When organisations are new, they are normally led by an influential leader with insight into how to support target beneficiaries. Through the case studies, this seems to be essential in mobilising and potentially funding the start-up of the charitable venture. As the business matures and gains access to alternative funds, the focus seems to move towards the achievement of outcomes linked to the availability of focused funding, predominantly linked to government priorities (offender HE is not a priority). This may lead the organisation to partially lose focus on the original goals, in pursuit of monetary gain. It is this diversification risk that would need to be managed by the corporate governance structure. In the example of the perceived niche market seen in the O2U proposal, there will be a need to keep the organisation focused on the priorities, or risk losing its identity within the lower attainment and employability focused areas of grants and government led contracts. Maintaining viability whilst maintaining core beliefs may be difficult without significant backing from a benefactor or fundraising activity. However, fundraising through donations may require special attention, as raising money for offenders to go to university, may not be easy, since it would be competing with the larger charities linked to, for example, cancer, poverty, animals or natural disasters.

#### **7.5 Governance**

Governance has emerged as a key driver in the case studies, with smaller organisations having assistance from experts within their governance structures and the larger corporations having formal governance structures. With perceived humble beginnings, an organisation that supports offenders to HE will probably have limited formal governance, probably from the CEO or founder. This, in time, will limit the ability to manage a credible charitable organisation and will require a more formal structure, bringing in external support and expertise in managing a sustainable venture. Stakeholders have been identified in this document and it is these who should be looked to first in sourcing potential governance board members. With the probation service, prison service, FE and HE and advice and guidance organisations being part of the governance framework, one would have access to their expertise. In addition, these members would act as enablers to market the service and raise

awareness of the needs of this niche group to the wider support community for offenders. It will be important to get the right balance of expertise from stakeholders e.g. in finance, human resources and leadership. In addition, it will be vital to maintain the original core beliefs of the organisation through the leadership of the committee and from the O2U senior management.

## **7.6 Staffing the O2U**

Identifying the kinds of people that will be core to the organisation is key, especially in the early days of the venture with limited resources. Planning this, before recruitment, is essential to ensure that the correct mix is achieved. The overall aim of this type of organisation is to help offenders to access HE, and identifying how this will be achieved will identify the attributes required in staff to be recruited. There is evidence that the value of volunteers to the proposed model will be key in accessing cost effective labour, whilst using the volunteering activity as a mechanism to develop the academic and interpersonal skills required to survive and thrive during a university education. Treating volunteers as assets and with equality to paid staff members will be key in supporting a whole person approach to the development of the offender clients. This will, hopefully, also support the independence and self-confidence of the offenders, essential for participating at university where offender related support services are scarce.

There are a number of what have been referred to as “Pathway” support organisations, which play a vital part in supporting offenders’ education, training and employment journeys. It is therefore a recommendation here that any O2U organisation should focus on the gaps in services and avoid duplication. This will provide added value to existing services and remove competitive barriers to the mobilisation of services, enabling differentiation and the provision of a bespoke service for offenders. Maximising referrals to and from pathway organisations will support the outcomes of the O2U and minimise the need to provide unnecessary services that would impact on overheads.

## **7.7 Funding the O2U**

Of all the sections of this research, this has been the most difficult to evaluate. It is easy to aspire to the business models of Nacro and Catch 22, but have organisations like Nacro lost their way, losing sight of the original goal of helping offenders with housing? This may seem a ridiculous question when admiring Nacro’s balance

sheet, and seeing how many offenders they help each year, but with their recent divergence towards general welfare to work, it is worth pondering.

The O2U will not start without a voluntary donation from a benefactor; initial voluntary work to generate funding for the on-going work or a government incentive to pump prime the organisation. What is clear is that this type of organisation requires entrepreneurial flair or a government white paper, identifying the need and benefit to the UK, to trigger opportunities for funding. As higher attaining offenders are in a minority, and with reduced funding for education, even for lower skilled offenders, this is not likely. Therefore, it would be down to a benefactor or group to start this type of organisation.

A good example of this can be seen in the Bounce Back Foundation, which would be a preferred model to mobilise this type of service with limited capital backing. The service would deliver a commercial service that generates funding. For Bounce Back this is painting and decorating but, as this service would aim to attract offenders with higher attainment levels, a more academic profession would be preferable, e.g. training. Core staff would then be paid for by revenue from the commercial activity. Profits would be targeted at supporting beneficiaries, using the deliverable service to embed desirable academic and personal skills, alongside those services that could be delivered directly to beneficiaries. Another attractive part of the Bounce Back model is the low overheads. With such activities as training, the overheads can be controlled, especially when remote working (e.g. online/virtual) can minimise costs. When compared with many charity shop fundraising models, this seems a better and more obvious choice.

One model of fundraising in isolation is a risky way to manage a business. Lessons should be taken from organisations such as Catch 22, which have a good mix of government contracts, investments and fundraising methods, therefore maximising revenue through diverse revenue streams. A risk of the Bounce Back model is that it is currently reliant on one funding stream in a commercial sector. This may be a low cost way to enter a market, but will not be sustainable as demand for the service grows. This is the reason why they have identified a need for grants and other forms of government funding. Interestingly, they have not planned to extend their fundraising efforts, but this may be seen to be controversial when securing regular funding from the general public. Therefore, it is recommended that strategic links to organisations and other charities be forged to secure this funding. Grants should be

systematically applied for, starting with easier to access Big Lottery funding, and aspiring to build relationships with large corporate organisations that are well placed to tender for regional based contracts. There are a range of services that are available, at a low cost per year, to help smaller organisations identify potential funding opportunities. This type of service would help to access funding that may be missed, through lack of resources, in the early stages of business operation. Networking is key in securing sustainable growth. Spreading the news of the O2U service will not be effective unless the managers of the enterprise use all methods possible to market the service. This was evidenced in the example of the Longford Trust and the project at Goldsmiths where, not only had probation services and prisons not heard of the service, but staff at Goldsmiths were not aware either.

Having chosen an initial funding model will not mean that it will remain the same over time as it will need to evolve to support longer term sustainability. Those with the entrepreneurial flair required to start a venture such as this, will also understand the value of sourcing available funding, whilst maintaining the overall corporate objectives.

### **7.8 Performance analysis and development delivery**

The literature review included examples of potential measurements for the O2U linked to revenue, employment, progression to university and attainment of degree level courses. There is a need to be realistic in the development of these targets in the context of the viability and sustainability of the businesses. Revenue generation should be measured separately from the measurements of achievement of the overall aims of the business of supporting offenders into HE. These separate parts of the business will influence each other: one may be successful; the other may not, with non-embedded support being classed as an overhead for the company.

It is clear from the literature review that higher ability offenders are disadvantaged by the lack of appropriate education routes and qualifications that support a university education. Therefore, a valid target, separate from revenue, should be in place for this. The delivery of GCSEs and A Levels is an achievable outcome for a small enterprise with the benefit of flexible, tailored delivery being designed to maximise participation and achievement levels. The delivery of degree level programmes at a project's inception seems not to be achievable and would require too much infrastructure investment. Investment in the referral process to pathways

organisations will be a high priority in order to underpin the holistic process of supporting offenders to and through university.

Therefore, recommended performance metrics at the start of a venture should include tangible qualification outcomes. Delivering qualifications that are academically rigorous and recognised by universities should be a priority and these are easy to measure by volume, success rates, grades and progression to other qualifications and university.

A secondary target should be the maintenance and usage of the pathways network. By placing a targeted focus on using and networking with the pathways providers, this essential support network will be utilised, mapped to the needs of the current offender beneficiaries. The O2U service will also receive exposure from networking opportunities, boosting its profile and spreading the core message of the importance of education for offenders.

This marketing message needs to be communicated. Traditional marketing in newspapers etc. will be, initially, beyond the capabilities of the O2U and of questionable value for money when they do have the revenue, due to the niche nature of such a service. Therefore, networking, partnering, maximising online presence and other, more personal marketing routes become of greater value. This may be the best way to attract benefactors and partners, as well as the users of the O2U service. Having a clear message of what the organisation's goals and outcomes are is essential in communicating to an audience.

### **7.9 Next Steps in supporting offenders to university**

The central research question that this thesis has answered is: How do you design a community based offender education model that incorporates support to access Higher Education? Based on this there are key areas that were explored. (1) To understand what current offender education offers through an analysis of the Leitch Report from an offender perspective. (2) To analyse how well the current curriculum offered to offenders prepares them for HE. (3) To understand corporate university models and identify a model that can be modified to the needs of the proposed O2U organisation. (4) To understand the needs of offenders in relation to how they might access HE successfully and (5) To analyse stakeholder opinions, which will influence the recommended design of the O2U model.

Progressing through the research process from concept, design and literature review to evaluating the completed research, has been an arduous process due to the lack of interest in supporting offenders to progress to HE. The attitudes of outcome orientated performance cultures have already impacted negatively on the delivery of services to hard to reach groups, and will continue to impact negatively, especially if the niche groups are not part of government targets. Payment by results contracts will focus service providers on achieving targeted aims, but at what cost to these niche groups if the targets are only focused on lower level education and employment aims?

Throughout this thesis evidence has been presented demonstrating that the current support mechanisms for offender education, by most stakeholders and education providers, is inadequate. The gaps in provision are linked to the behaviours and perceptions of individuals, organisations and policy that those with higher levels of education should be able to support themselves using existing structures of accessing higher education. This has been shown to be incorrect through this research, where some of those sampled were confused by complex admission policies, lacked appropriate advice and guidance and could not navigate the protracted processes involved with applying for higher education places. This alone is complex enough, but when combined with other potential factors in some offenders chaotic lives (housing, health, debt, addiction, association with other criminals...), treating them the same as any other HE applicant is not adequate.

The most frustrating part of this research process, from a practitioners perspective, is that the current educational framework for offenders sets them up to fail, in terms of progression to higher levels of education. Maths and English are important foundations, but using easier to achieve qualifications that are “equivalents”, does no one any favours and puts barriers in the way of these vulnerable learners. This is made worse by the levels of vocational training that is available to offenders, which is primarily available at entry-level to level 1.

Writing this section of the thesis, it is hard not to think negatively about the level of support for those trapped in low-level education. It is societies duty to offer inspirational progression support to low socio-economic groups to help break the cycle of low-level attainment, which is linked to intergenerational crime and other negative social factors. Philanthropic individuals and organisations may be better



placed than government to spearhead this type of support, which needs to be sustainable, not seen in various ESF funded projects that come and go. This research has investigated potential barriers for offenders progressing and succeeding in higher education, whilst exploring potential funding models to support such a venture.

What is needed is support for all ability levels, with the additional support that some offenders require, linked to the established 7 Pathways model of support. Offenders need this additional support to help them break free of intergenerational low attainment levels, low pay and criminogenic cycles. This all requires funding. Funding that the government doesn't seem to have, especially near to a general election where it would be hard to win votes on a platform of: ***Support a Hoodie to Uni.***

The charitable benevolent nature of the few seems to be where the hopes of improvement lies for the support of offenders in general, with a history of this being evidenced as far back as the 1800's in the case studies. This is not a new concept, but it does demonstrate the need for individuals, and members of niche groups, to fight for their right to a differentiated service.

This thesis has advocated the use of a corporate university style business model to allow for funding generation, whilst fostering the skills and personal development essential for progression to HE. There is a clear requirement for offenders to be as independent as other students, no matter what other barriers or support needs they have. This is because of the lack of differentiated services in most universities. An example of excellence has been explored through the case study on the Open University. However, even their enviable, inclusive model excludes, by design, those offenders who may require support but who are not on a probation licence.

There is a paradox related to the perceived requirements of offenders during the application process for university. On the one hand, offenders want to be treated as equals. On the other hand, they want support due to factors related to their potentially "chaotic lives". Through the analysis of university admission policies this was evident. Those universities that were perceived to have excluding characteristics were also shown to be the most inclusive through policy design, applications and admissions. This paradox is easily explained by the lack of understanding, on the part of offenders, of the services that are on offer in universities. Offenders do not have access to university level information at their normal point of support e.g.

probation, prisons, peer networks and services such as the National Careers Service. The National Careers Service is an anomaly in itself, as this service is present in universities. However, the part of the service that comes into contact with offenders is designed to support the stereotypical lower attainment and employment outcomes that are seen throughout offender education, training and employment support.

There is a clear need for services that support higher education progression and attainment, as seen in the ideas behind the O2U concept, demonstrated through the survey of Bedfordshire and Norfolk Probation Service's offenders' attainment levels and through interviews with identified, capable offenders. But, this is for a minority of the offender population, whereas there seems to be a never-ending appetite for such services as short-term goals of employment and reduction in re-offending that currently take priority. The main issue that this research brings to the surface is that more research is needed. A larger sample size, wider demographics and being longitudinal in design would be improvements that would add value to data and hopefully enrich the narrative around the value of investing in offender education.

This has been a fascinating piece of research that has uncovered new information, confirmed assumptions and challenged traditional thinking regarding offender education. Lets hope the right people read this research and do something more to help offenders to break the cycle of reoffending. Through achieving their true potential in life and not that where offenders are manoeuvred into inadequate, poorly researched and under-funded education, aimed the lowest echelons of society or at keeping offenders busy until the next time they offend.

## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Community Based Offender Prior Attainment Survey Results (raw data)

Date of data collection	No Qualifications or Entry Level = 72 / 19%	Level 1 = 186 / 48%	Level 2= 96 / 25%	Level 3= 27 / 7%	Level 4 = 1 / 0%	Level 5 = 2 / 1%	Level 6= 3 / 1%	Level 7 = 1 / 0%	Level 8 = 1 / 0%
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## **Appendix 2: Interview schedule - Offender interviews: in depth**

Introduction: Closed questions (data to be captured on an individual basis)

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Ethnic origin (ask how they define themselves)
4. Type of Order/Licence (including conditions/requirements)
5. Are you currently on an education, training or skills training programme as part of your probation order?
  - a. If yes, use Question set A: offender currently studying as part of probation order
  - b. If no, have you ever been involved in education as part of an order?
    - i. If no, use Question Set B: offenders never engaged with education as part of probation order.
    - ii. If yes, use Question Set C: offenders not currently engaged with education as part of a probation order.

Group Interview Question set: Offenders with prior attainment levels above level 2 (in depth)

1. General involvement in education
  - a. What are/were they doing and where
  - b. What kind of education/learning/skill development are/were you doing?
  - c. Why are you on probation (part of order, license, unpaid work, voluntary...)
  - d. Did you get to choose what type of course you did?
    - i. If so, did you choose a course?
    - ii. If, did not choose a course, why?
  - e. What else was offered?
  - f. What qualifications gained/working towards
    - i. Are these of value to you?
    - ii. What do you intend to use them for?
  - g. Are your aims to go to university/college or study a Higher Education course

- i. If yes, what do you want to study?
    - ii. If yes, what career are you planning to work in once you are qualified?
  - h. Have you been offered support to access education above level 2 (e.g. GCSE)?
    - i. If yes, what type of support?
  - i. Have you requested support to access education above level 2 (e.g. GCSE)?
    - i. If yes, tell me what the process and outcome was.
    - ii. Was this enough? If no, what was missing?
- 2. Benefits/outcomes – (concentrate on supporting skills that could be used to access Higher Education at a later date)
  - a. What are the most useful things you have learnt from being supported by probation or any services you have accessed whilst on probation?
  - b. What has been the best thing about the education support and/or advice and guidance you have received?
  - c. Is there anything else you feel you gained from the learning/skills programmes that may prepare you for Higher Education? (confidence, communication skills, how to apply for University...)
  - d. Do you think the qualifications and/or skills you have completed will help you in the future? E.g. getting a job/better job, going to college/university, any other ambitions?
  - e. What do you want to be doing in 5 years time? Would you like to continue with your learning to access Higher Education?
- 3. Assessing the needs of the offender
  - a. How were your needs assessed?
  - b. Did you meet with someone to assess your needs?
    - i. If yes, Who was this? Do you know why they referred you?
  - c. Did they explain the reason behind the referral?
  - d. Was there a choice of where you could study?
- 4. If referred by probation to a support/training provider, how did you feel when you were referred for education?
  - i. Delivery method/training provider
  - ii. Level of education
  - iii. Subject

- b. What did you have to do before you started the programme?
    - c. What did you expect from the learning programme?
    - d. Were your expectations better or worse than you originally felt?
    - e. Did this feeling change over time?
  - f. Educational and skills needs
    - i. Did the educational programme meet your needs?  
(Subject/Level/linked to aspirations)
    - ii. Was the offer not quite what you wanted?
      - 1. If yes, what do you think you would have benefited from more?
      - 2. How would this be better linked to your goals?
    - iii. Were you put on the right programme for you?
5. Life at school or post 16 education
- a. How did you get on at school academically?
  - b. Did you go to university?
    - i. If yes, What was the outcome of?
    - ii. If no, Why didn't you go to university from school?
  - c. Were you ever offered help to go to university?
  - d. Do you feel you are capable of studying a degree level qualification?
  - e. If you could go back in time, would you have liked to have gone to university?
  - f. If you could, would you like to study a degree in the future?  
(university, college or distance learning)
6. Perceptions of the value of education
- a. How important is education to you, your family and your career?
  - b. Do you think Higher Education is important?
  - c. How do you think you would benefit from Higher Education?
7. Education and offenders generally
- a. Thinking about Higher Education: Why do you think some people don't value Higher Education?
  - b. What would you say to someone who is thinking about studying in Higher Education?

- c. What can be done to encourage more adults on probation to access Higher Education?
- d. What do you think are the barriers for adults on probation in accessing Higher Education?
- e. What do you think probation (and other probation services) could do to support adults on probation to be able to progress to university?

8. Offenders wanting to go to university: Interview Set Questions.

- a. What are you studying/hoping to study?
- b. Why would you like to study this?
- c. Would the purpose of your study be for self-development, employment or other?
- d. Is the nature of your offence going to prohibit you working in your chosen area?
- e. What research have you already done?
- f. What barriers have you encountered, or do you perceive?
- g. Have you got a preferred university?
  - i. If so, why?
- h. What qualifications have you already got?
- i. Do they meet the entry requirements of the university?
  - i. If no, what do you plan to do to address that?
- j. What type of support do you think you need?
  - i. Before
  - ii. During
  - iii. After

9. Show interviewee the university admissions policy cards – ask for feedback:

- a. How do they make you feel about applying for the specific university based on the admissions policy and/or offender application policy?



### Appendix 3: Freedom of Information Request

*Dear Sir or Madam,*

*Under the Freedom of Information Act I seek the following information about the your institutions admissions data for the **last full academic year** related to students who have disclosed offences as part of applying and studying for undergraduate and postgraduate courses.*

1. What is the number of prospective learners who have disclosed a conviction - to include undergraduate and postgraduate applications?
2. What is the number of students who had their application refused based on their disclosure of a conviction?
3. What is the number of students with disclosed convictions who were accepted and what courses were they enrolled on?
4. How many of the above students took advantage of APL or credit transfer from other institutions?
5. How does the university use its data linked to criminal convictions e.g. is it used as part of the universities widening participation agenda?
6. Please can you email me a copy of the universities admissions policy related to offenders.

*I would prefer to receive this information electronically, preferably as a data set, e.g. in Excel, NOT as a PDF.*

*If the decision is made to withhold some of this data using exemptions in the Data Protection Act, please inform me of that fact and cite the exemptions used.*

*If some parts of this request are easier to answer than others, I would ask that you release the available data as soon as possible.*

*If you need any clarification then please do not hesitate to contact me. Under Section 16 it is your duty to provide advice and assistance and so I would expect you to contact me if you find this request unmanageable in any way.*

*I would be grateful if you could confirm by email, that you have received this request, and I look forward to hearing from you within the 20-working day statutory time*

*period.*

*Regards,*

Gordon West

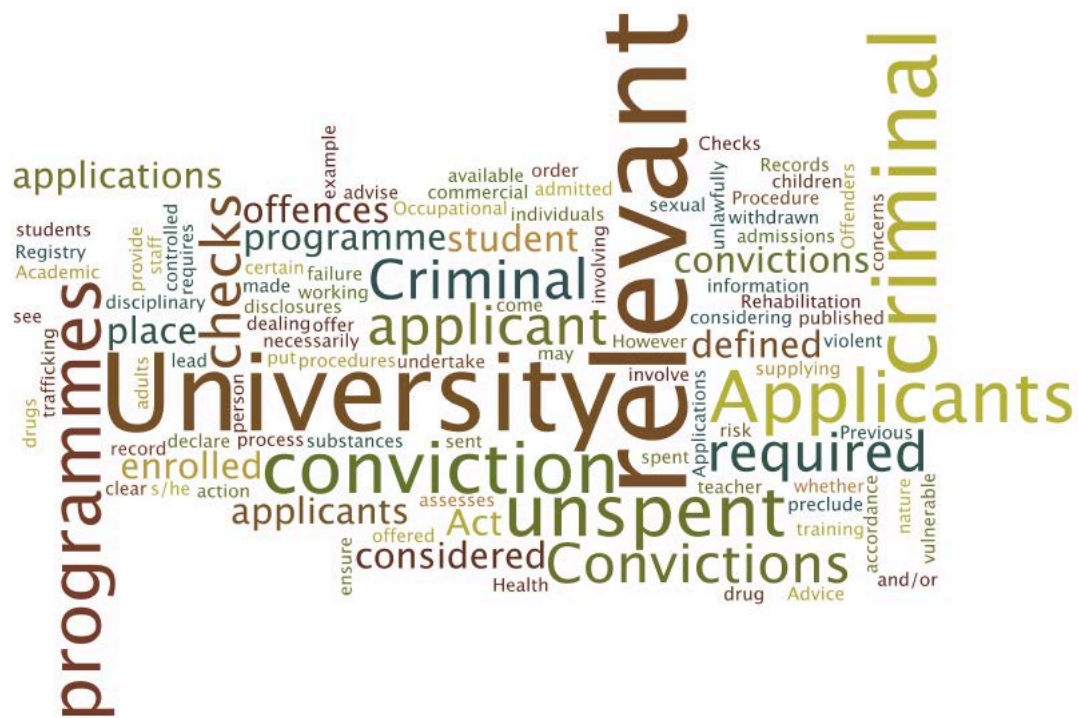
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## University of Birmingham



## University of Bradford







University of Cambridge



Canterbury Christ Church University



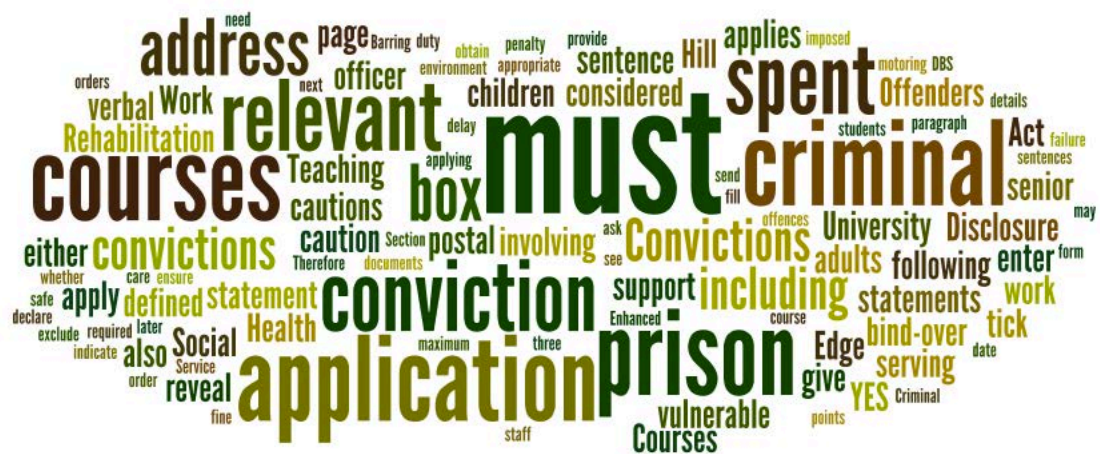




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Edge Hill University



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Newcastle University



Oxford University







A word cloud featuring various terms related to criminal convictions and applications. The words are arranged in a dense, overlapping manner. The largest word is 'CONVICTION' in a bold, orange-brown font. Below it, 'CRIMINAL' is also large, in a dark blue/black font. Other prominent words include 'APPLICATION' in red, 'POLICIES' in dark blue, 'DISCLOSURE PRACTICES' in red, 'SUBJECT APPLICATIONS' in red, 'DIRECTOR' in yellow, 'IDENTIFIED' in dark blue, 'PROCESS' in dark blue, 'DECISION' in dark blue, 'CONVICTIONS' in red, 'APPLICATIONS' in yellow, 'INDEPENDENTLY' in red, 'UNDERTAKE' in red, 'PASSED' in red, 'ACTION' in red, 'DECLARED' in red, 'STUDENTS' in dark blue, 'ADMISSIONS' in red, 'MADE DECLARATION' in yellow, 'RELEVANT' in red, 'FOLLOWED' in red, 'APPROPRIATE' in red, 'SERVICES' in red, and 'STUDENT' in dark blue. The background is white.

University of Surrey



University College London





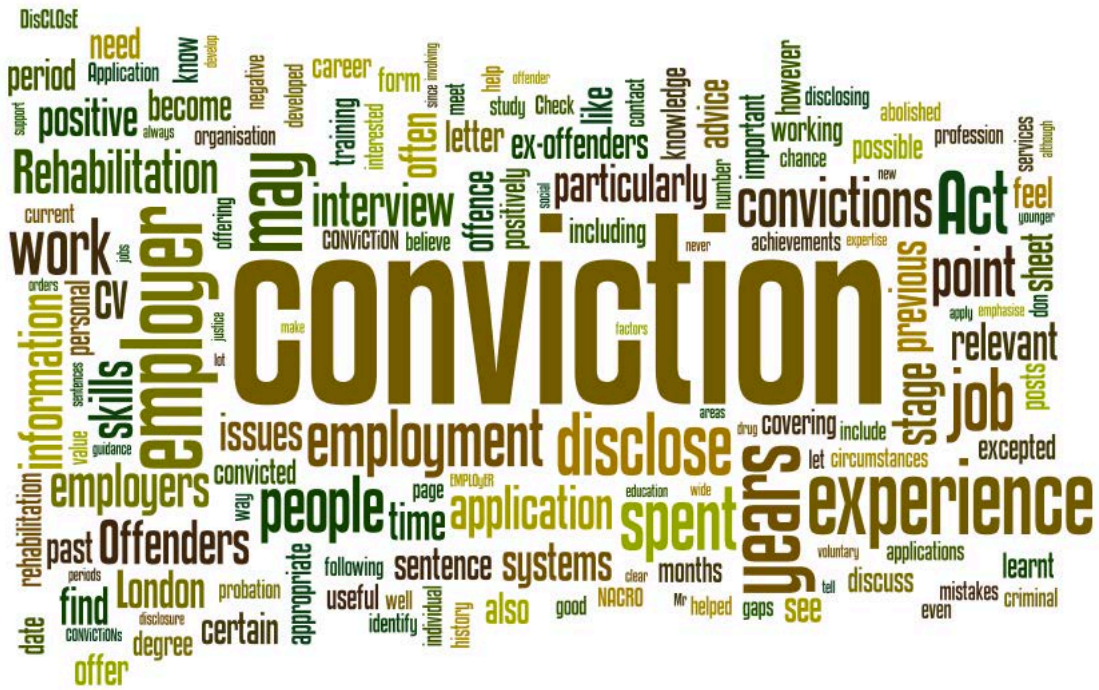
University for the Creative Arts



University of Central Lancaster



University of Westminster



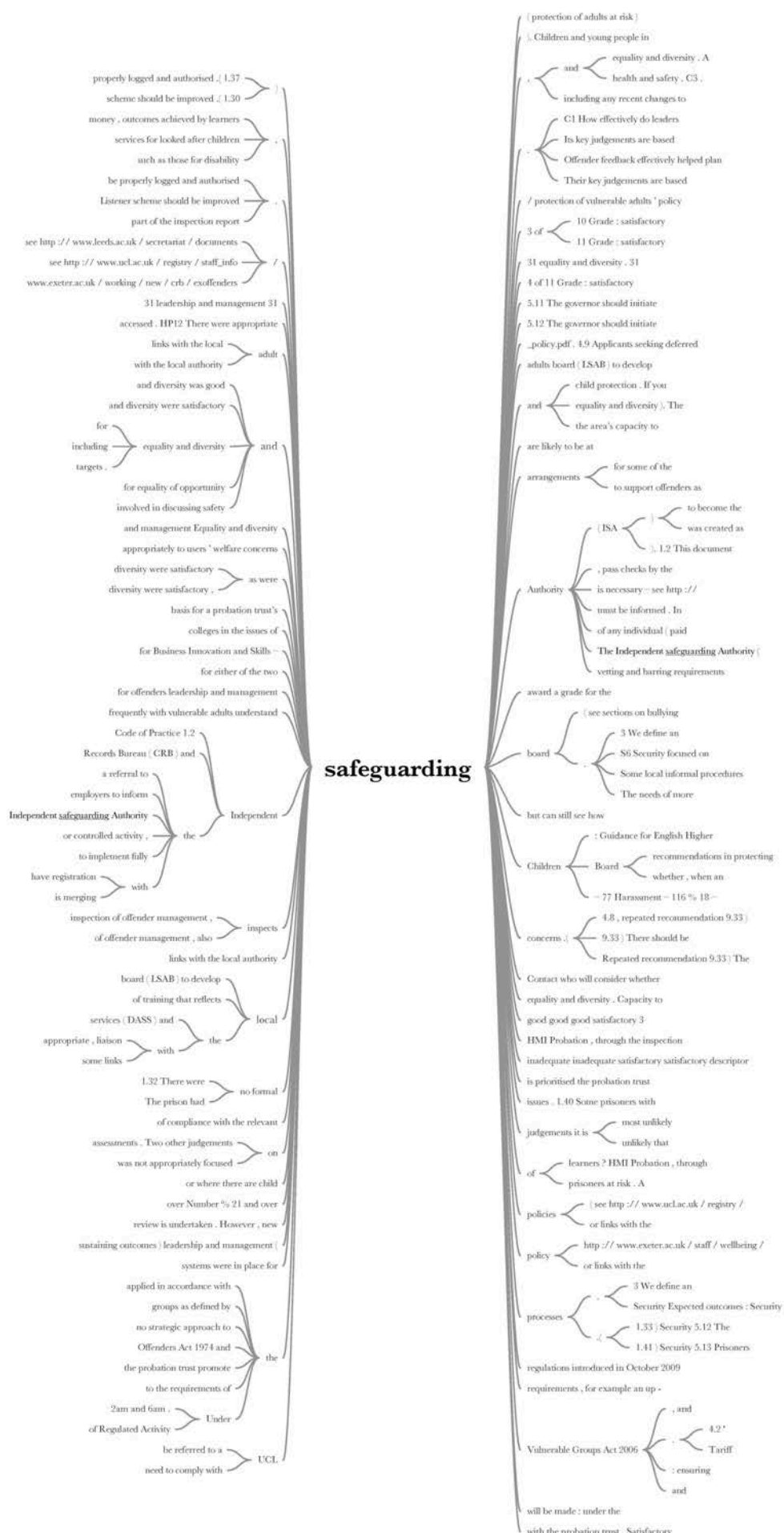
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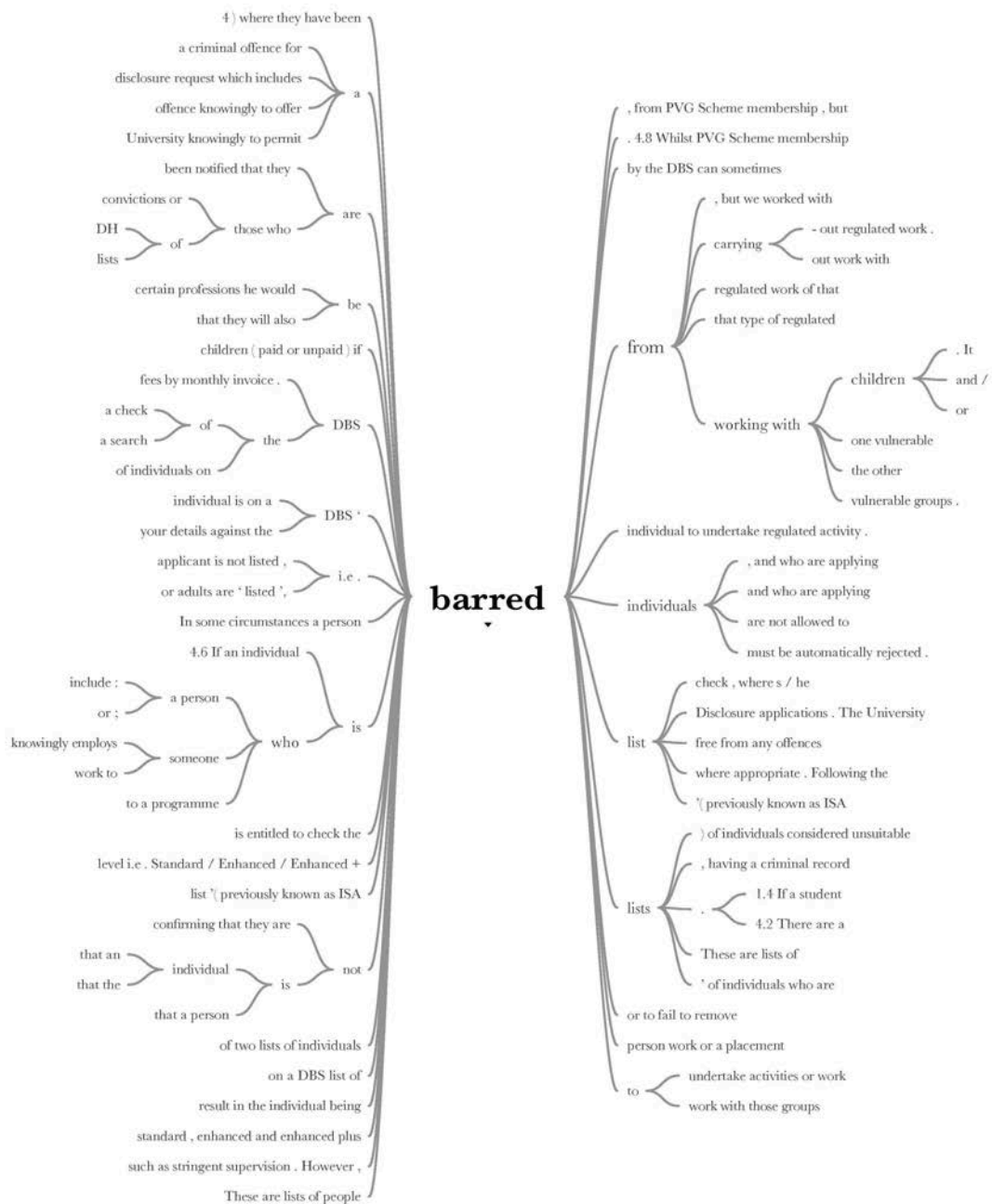




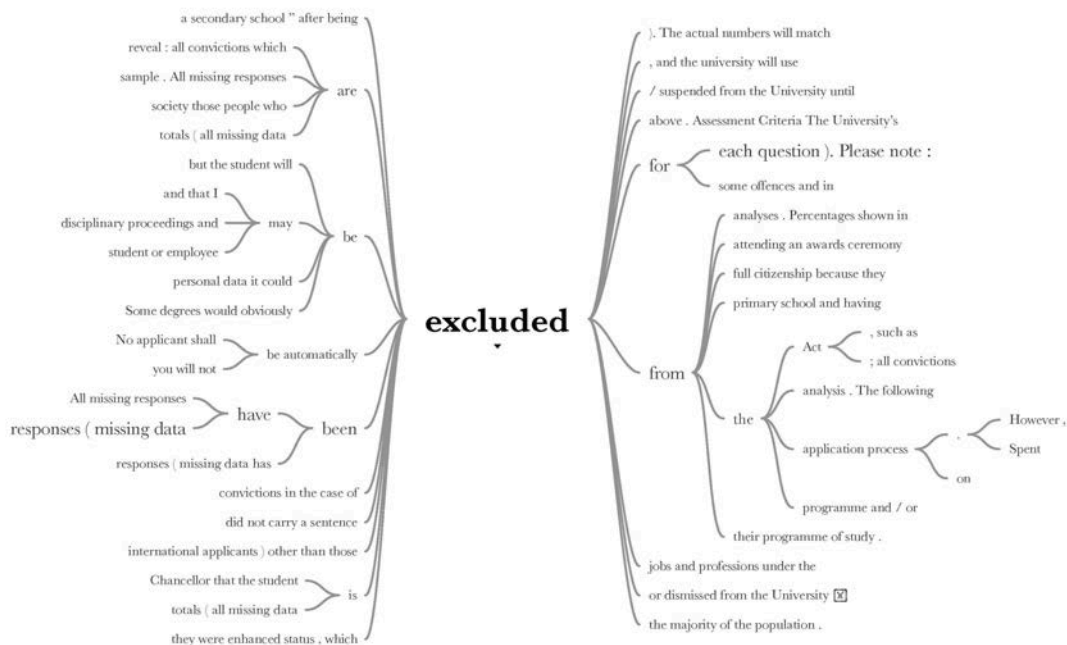
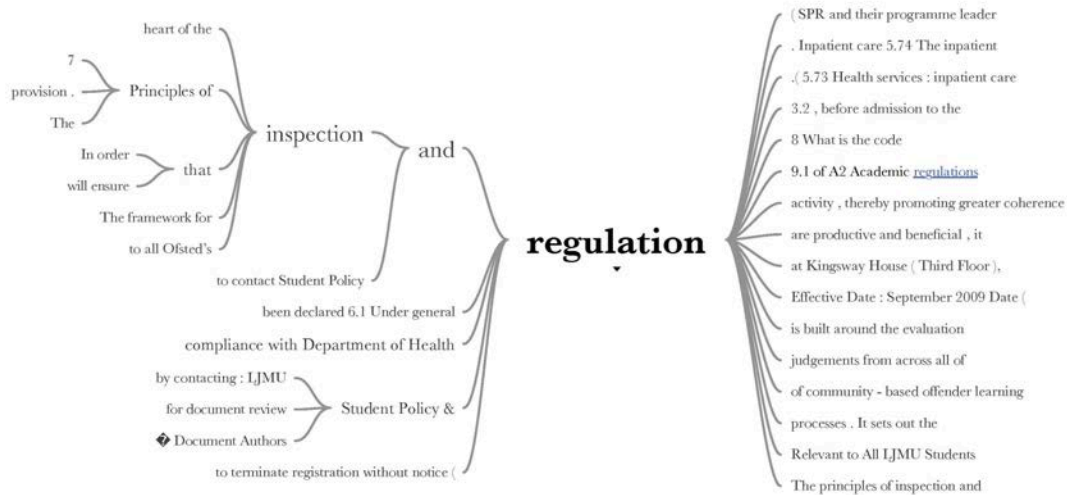
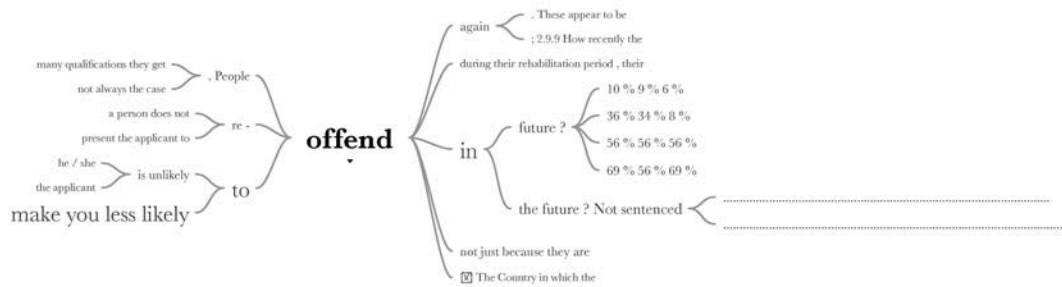
## Appendix 5: Excluding Factors word tree analysis











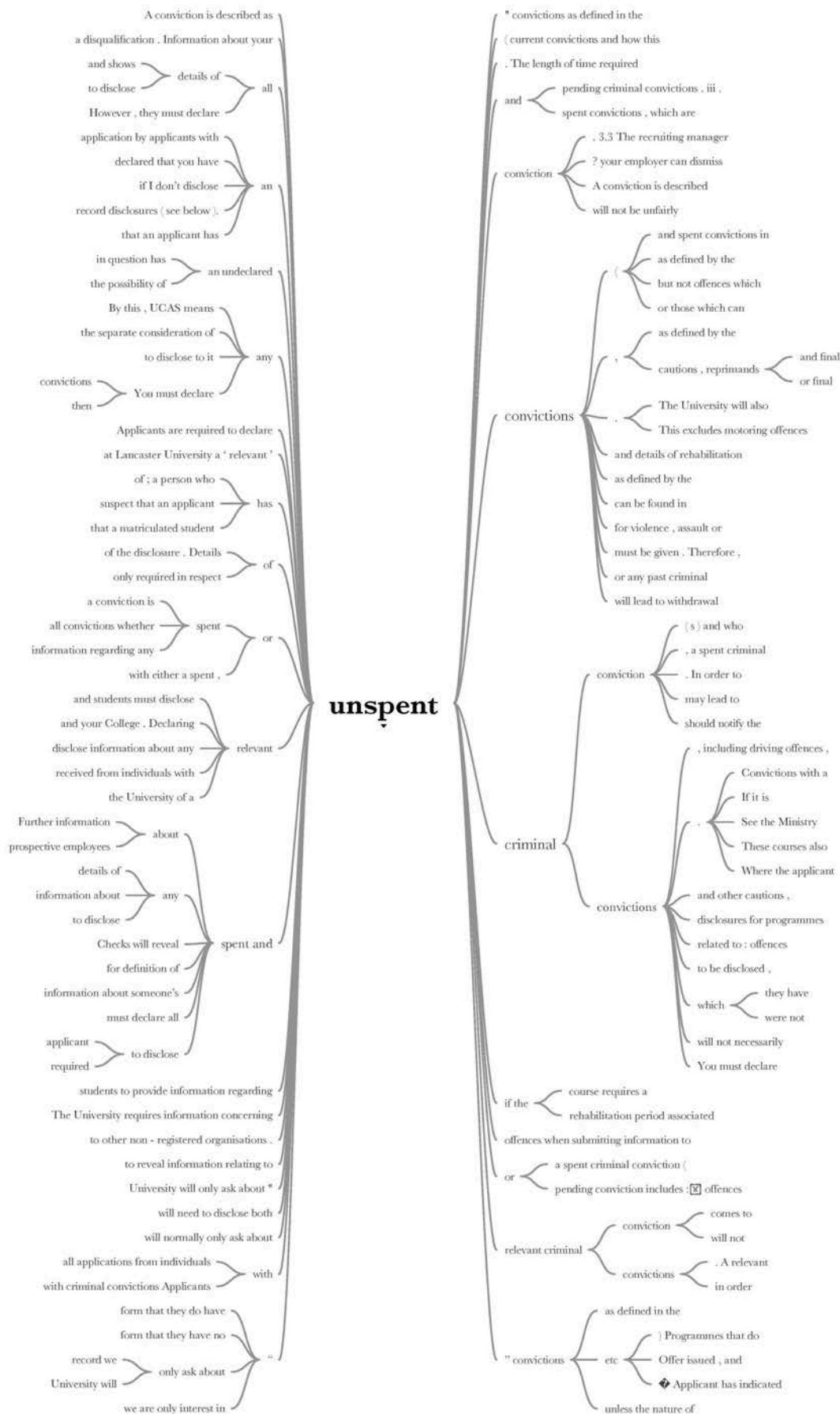
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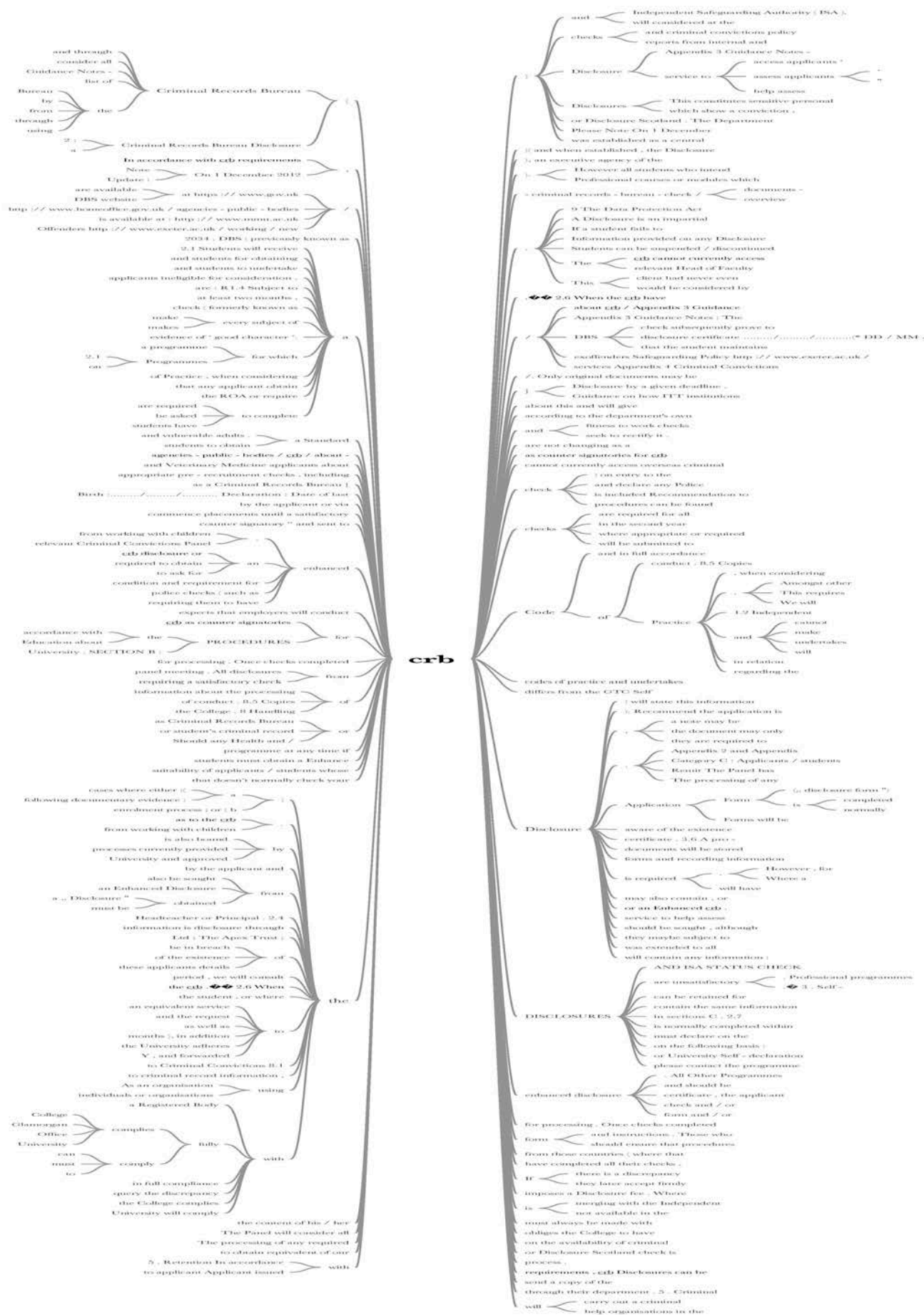
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required to tell us about } **spent** { . Applicants sometimes voluntarily bring information  
convictions as defined in the

aware of and alert to  
control and participation ' rather than '  
had a good understanding of  
in 2010 , procedures for assessing  
raise issues of public protection , } **vulnerability** { , risk and dependency ' ( Disability Rights  
and many identified prisoners who  
issues , are appropriately trained and  
on reception were weak . First  
or self - harm , and / or

academic and non - academic ) , the  
applicants asked about convictions and  
College based on criminal conviction  
convictions in relation to its  
do not } have a statutory  
that do }  
seeking references - particularly information concerning  
that satisfaction of the College  
a } statutory duty  
no }  
a } statutory requirement  
non - } } **fitness to train** { criminal convictions , cautions or bindings -  
notwithstanding the different legal requirement  
the } Rehabilitation of Offenders Act  
requirements of the Rehabilitation  
and requirement for enhanced  
condition { satisfied . Confirmation of place  
will not in its  
issues at interview Admissions Tutor  
requirement e.g . { BA English , MA  
Youth Work , Social  
requirements . These organisations might include :  
- will be explicitly conditional on

a perfect analogy given that ,  
dealing with a static demographic -  
my conviction ? CV & covering letter } **unlike** { an application form you decide  
in the case of the  
the probation service or universities .





## **Appendix 6: Charity Case Studies: An analysis of structure and funding models used to support offender beneficiaries**

### ***Addaction Case Study***

Information sources:

- Addaction: Report and Financial Statements 31 March 2013
- Telephone interview with Addaction delivery manager: Crowcross Street, London.

### **Structure, Governance and Management**

The Trustees are responsible for the overall management of the charity, its strategic direction and decision-making. There are three committees with specific responsibility to the Board of Trustees: the Audit & Risk Committee; the Human Resources Committee and the Clinical Governance Committee. Matters not reserved for decision by the Board of Trustees are delegated to the Chief Executive. Trustees are recruited in response to an identified skills gap following a rigorous external recruitment process. New Trustees are provided with a thorough induction into their role through a meeting with the Chief Executive Officer and members of the Executive, at least two project visits in the first few months of their tenure and briefings from key members of staff on Addaction's work and their legal responsibilities as Trustees. New Trustees also sign an agreement that sets out Addaction's expectations of their role and responsibilities. All Trustees undergo annual appraisals conducted by the Chair of the Trustees, who is in turn appraised by the Board of Trustees as a whole.

### **Risks**

The organisation speaks of political changes, specifically payment by results, as the main threat and weaknesses to their current operations.

### **Targeted Benefit to Offenders**

Many of the organisations services will support offenders and their families. Related to education, Addaction launched a suite of training materials in 2013 to support a wider platform of delivery and make these resources available to beneficiaries and the organisations that support clients in the areas of addiction. The aims of this organisation are not linked to general education as they specialise in their own area of expertise.

“Addaction support a range of offenders, not generally for education. When a client enquires about education, outside of Addactions remit, I refer them to the best person/organisation that is available. I know where to send them from using the Internet and through our local partnership meetings, where I keep up to date with local ETE offers.”

### **Achievements and performance**

In 2012/13 Addaction helped 43,301 individuals, families, children and young people to overcome the challenges of addiction. Addaction has 117 sites across the UK.

### **Funding model overview**

Addaction relies mainly on competitive tendering for local authority and government contracts, which are converting to mainly payment by results in nature. Addaction have started to diversify into other payment by results markets to support growth and to use their existing complimentary services. This has been seen recently in Cornwall where the organisation has secured funding to support welfare to work clients through employment, training and education services.

The organisation works in partnership with some corporate organisations, termed “mutual aid partnerships, citing an example of how Heineken funds one of their support programmes. Most other project specific funding is sourced from publicly available funding from sources such as the Big Lottery to support the beneficiaries. In 2013, Addaction started to promote Charity and Social Impact Bonds. These bonds will use private investment to support intervention and treatment services, with a proven track record. This is a new Coalition idea to get private investors to take some of the risk of funding payment by results contracts and as yet is an unproven method in supporting the early stages of payment by results delivery.

### ***Bounce Back Foundation Case Study***

Information sources:

- Trustees Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2013
- Telephone interview with senior manager

### **Structure, Governance and Management**

Bounce Back Foundation was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee on 20 June 2011. Each of the members is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £10



towards to assets of the charitable company in the event of a winding up.

The power to appoint new Trustees is exercised by a majority in number of the existing Trustees. Where there is a need for new Trustees, this would be identified by the remaining Trustees. The Trustees meet regularly during year to agree the broad strategy and areas of activity for the Foundation, including consideration of reserves and risk management policies and performance. The day to day administration of the Foundation is handled by the Trustees directly. When a new trustee is appointed the existing Trustees take responsibility for induction. The Trustees have examined the major strategic, business and operational risks which the Foundation faces and confirm that systems have been established to enable continuous monitoring of such risks so that appropriate steps can be taken to lessen these risks.

The objects of the Foundation are the rehabilitation of ex-offenders, the relief of unemployment and the advancement of education and training principally for ex-offenders but also other socially excluded or marginalized people by providing them with:

- Tools and mechanisms to assist them to find employment
- Identifiable routes into employment
- Work experience, training, mentoring and advice & guidance on victim empathy and their workplace and citizenship responsibilities. The Trustees' main objectives is to focus on the training and employment of ex-offenders in **painting and decorating** on their release from custody.

## **Risks**

With limited funds available, Bounce Back is running at a deficit of £28,000 (2013) with a turnover of £156,647 (£30,000 better than the previous year in line with their business plan – according to the interviewee). Many small enterprises like this are established by well meaning individuals and groups, but without donations or government contracts struggle to survive. “We feel that we would be able to do more with some government contracts, but we are so small that we cant secure regional multi million pound contracts. We are looking to do more sub-contract work with larger providers, but even this is hard to get into and they take anything from 12% to 35% management fee, in a shrinking more for less payment by results contract environment.”

## **Targeted Benefit to Offenders**

On release, candidates come into the Bounce Back training centre and undertake a programme of training and work experience leading to NVQ Level 1 and 2 qualifications. In addition, through construction industry partnerships, more qualifications can be achieved whilst in training.

“Our clients are not generally interested in anything else other than construction related training and finding a job. If someone wanted to go to college or University, I would refer them to the National Careers Service.”

### **Achievements and performance**

From a small painting and decorating company employing five ex-offenders from HMP Wandsworth in 2010, Bounce Back, the Charity, has now trained over 140 participants from 3 London prisons. This has enabled the Bounce Back Social Enterprise to build a team of over 40 professional painters and decorators working around London and the Home Counties, as well as support others into employment with large contractors.

### **Funding model overview**

Bounce Back receives most of its funding from commercial work it delivers from its painting and decorating arm. This revenue is then used to support beneficiaries. There has recently been funding sourced from sub-contract agreements with welfare to work and skills partners to boost the levels of support that this organisation can offer its beneficiaries.

### **Catch 22 Case Study**

Information sources:

- Report and financial statements year end March 2013
- Telephone interview with Finance Manager

### **Structure, Governance and Management**

Catch22 was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee on 28 April 2008. It was registered as a charity on 19 May 2008. The Trustee board meets at least four times a year and has established a number of committees to which certain functions are delegated. These are Finance and Business Administration, Audit and Governance and Remuneration. Additionally, the Finance and Business Administration Committee has established an Investment sub-committee, which concerns itself with Catch22's Investment portfolio. The committees monitor progress against goals and targets that flow from the strategic plan set by the

Trustee board.

## **Risks**

The key risks Identified by Catch22 at the end of 2012/13, together with the actions taken or intended to be taken in response to these risks are as follows

- Loss of *income* due to public sector spending cuts and increased competition Catch22's response is to focus more resource on our business development team, keep our quality high and our costs competitive
- Increasingly stringent delivery conditions imposed by commissioners- particularly in relation to 'payment by results' contracts. Catch22's response is to ensure a strong focus on quality and performance as well as careful consideration and control on the contract terms they accept.

## **Targeted Benefit to Offenders**

'To promote opportunities for the development, education and support of young people in need to lead purposeful, stable and fulfilled lives and to promote safer, crime free communities for the benefit of the public'

## **Funding model overview**

Catch22 holds 67.5% of the share capital of Catch22 Social Enterprise Limited, the other 37.5% being owned by Bridges Social Entrepreneurs Fund LP.

Through direct activity (government contracts) and that of its subsidiaries and investment portfolio, Catch22 turned over £54m, £13m profit, £14m of fixed assets and £9.7m of current assets in 2013.

- Catch22 owns 100% of Pupil Parent Partnership Limited, a company limited by guarantee,
- Catch22 also owns 100% of Catch22 Social Enterprise Solutions Limited, a company Incorporated on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2012
- Catch22 also owns 100% of Catch22 Multi Academies Trust Limited, a company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2012, and dormant at 31 March 2013.

## **Clinks Case Study**

Information sources:

- Report and financial statements year end March 2013

### **Structure, Governance and Management**

Clinks is a membership organisation and the Articles of Association specify that the management committee shall be made up of not less than eight members comprising up to eight elected members and up to four members co-opted by the management committee. One third of the elected trustees retire at each annual general meeting and trustees co-opted during the year also retire but are eligible for re-election. Trustees can also be elected at the annual general meeting if recommended by the trustees or if appropriate notice of the proposal to appoint is given. The members of the management committee are the trustees of the charity and also the directors of the company. In addition the management committee are required to co-opt a further member to act as Chair for a maximum period of six years.

### **Management Board**

The management committee, which meets regularly, administers the charity. The day-to-day operations of the charity are managed by the director.

### **Risks**

According to Clinks financial statement "The trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed. Where significant risks have been identified systems have been or will be established to mitigate those risks."

Clinks funding strategy looks to be heavily reliant on charitable fundraising. In the current climate this seem a safer strategy, than being over reliant on government contracts and payment by results. With this in mind, their aims for 2014/15 seem to focus on the current transforming rehabilitation agenda as a mechanism for growth.

### **Targeted Benefit to Offenders**

The aim of the charity is to promote the rehabilitation of offenders by supporting voluntary and community organisations working with or for offenders and their families. Clinks is a membership organisation that seeks to assist in the rehabilitation of offenders by improving the links between the voluntary and community sector. Its members are voluntary and community organisations that support our aims. Friends come from a range of individuals, statutory and private organisations who support

our work.

### **Achievements and performance**

According to Clinks annual statement 2013, Clinks have;

- “1. Vigorously promoted the role of the voluntary sector in campaigning and service delivery activities that affect offenders and their families.*
- 2. Advocated on behalf of the sector ensuring that the strengths and resources of the Voluntary and Community Sector are recognised by Government and policy makers at all levels.*
- 3. Encouraged the dissemination of information that will enable the sector to stay informed and responsive to the development of the National Offender Management Service.*
- 4. Shared good practice and promoted collaboration across a wide range of other infrastructure and service delivery agencies.”*

### **Funding model overview**

Although this is a membership organisation, generating membership fees, this only accounted for £16,308 in 2013. Clinks mix of funding generation is primarily reliant on government contracts. In 2013 Clinks had 19 contracts, most below £100,000. Two of its contracts equated to just over £900,000 per annum. Compared to £28,000 worth of revenue generated from commercial activity. Clinks did give out over £400,000 in grants in 2013, supporting its offender beneficiaries through intermediary organisations, not direct to offenders.

### **Nacro Case Study**

Information sources:

- Interview with Nacro manager at HMP Bedford, Advisor at HMP Bure and HMP Wayland
- Nacro Strategic Plan 2013/16
- Report and financial statements year end March 2013

### **Structure, Governance and Management**

Trustees are appointed by open recruitment to ensure that as a group, Council possesses the appropriate experience and required competencies. The induction and training programme for new trustees includes briefing sessions with the Chief Executive, Chair and existing trustees, meetings with senior managers and visits to

Nacro projects and staff events. Nacro has a wholly owned subsidiary, Nacro Community Enterprises Limited, which operates as Nacro Housing. This company is incorporated in England and is limited by guarantee. It is both a registered provider of social housing and a registered charity. Under the terms of its memorandum and articles of association its income and property are not available either directly or indirectly for distribution to members. The results of Nacro Housing are consolidated within the group accounts.

The Council meets at least four times a year to review and monitor performance as well as to plan for the future and determine and approve strategy and business plans. In addition, trustees participate in a minimum of one residential meeting each year, which incorporates training and briefing on key matters relating to trustees' responsibilities.

The Council is assisted by the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) (with a remit to monitor and review risk management, audit matters and regulatory compliance), a Finance and

Resources Committee (FRC) (with a remit which covers finance, remuneration and human resources), and a Performance Committee (with a remit to consider operational practices and performance). Members of the committees are appointed by the Council and in the current year have included members of the Nacro Housing Board to ensure that all Group matters are covered. Each committee meets at least four times a year and reports back to the Council.

### **Management Board**

The Council appoints a Chief Executive who, with the executive directors (collectively known as the leadership team) is responsible for the day-to-day work of the charity. The leadership team meets monthly and reports regularly to Council.

### **Risks**

The key business risks that Nacro has identified are:

- Economic
  - Public sector reforms affect many of the services that Nacro delivers. Continued pressure on public spending continues to be a key business risk. Commissioners of the services that Nacro provide are continuing to seek reductions in contract value or to tender services that are reduced in value and scope. In mitigation Nacro are working to take advantage of those areas where Government commissioning

plans, such as in the delivery of rehabilitative services, and to build strong strategic partnerships to leverage Nacro's expertise, secure existing funding and to open new income streams.

- Payment-by-results funding models
  - The Government continues to pursue payment-by-results models across a range of public service delivery areas. Nacro state that such models, although right in principle, carry significant risks for voluntary sector providers, which Nacro are working with partners and potential investors to mitigate and to develop innovative funding approaches.

### **Targeted Benefit to Offenders**

Nacro is a leading crime reduction charity in England and Wales. With a team of over 1,000 staff and volunteers providing services in over 200 communities across the country, Nacro's experience on the ground gives the organisation insights into how to reduce crime in communities and change lives for the better.

Given an analysis of Nacro's current position and the objectives outlined in its Strategic

Plan 2013/16, it is clear that Nacro aims its "crime reduction mission" at current and projected government priorities. This excludes offenders wanting to go to university. Generally, there is good support for offenders to access education, but this is limited to the government priorities of lower level skills and those skills that are linked to short to medium term support of offenders into employment.

Taking account of these current priorities, Nacro's trustees and its leadership team have identified the following priority market areas for 2013-16 in its business plan:

- Housing
- Substance misuse
- Offender management
- Education (Higher Education is not mentioned)

### **Achievements and performance**

Nacro's achievements include the following:

- 15,500 individuals and employers received advice on the disclosure of criminal convictions from Nacro's Resettlement Advice Service.
- Nacro housed 2,200 people

- Nacro provided housing related support to another 2,000 people
- Nacro worked with 8,700 prisoners across the custodial estate
- Nacro helped 3,700 prisoners into education, training or employment
- 4,800 young people took part in Nacro's education programmes.

In the East of England, where my research is primarily based, Nacro have been delivering an advice and guidance contract in the regions prisons for the past three years. As part of this project the delivery teams in each prison have the remit of supporting general employment, training and educational goals of offender clients, supporting them in custody and facilitating support once released. During the interviews with delivery staff in three prisons, HMP Bedford, HMP Bure and HMP Wayland, delivery staff stated they could not provide data on the level of support for clients inquiring or progressing to Higher Education learning. The staff did comment that they do have limited requests for Higher Education, with the majority of requests being for basic employability, e.g. CV support and job search, and lower level skills development, e.g. CSCS cards, basic skills and vocational training.

The staff did comment that as Higher Education is not a priority and the funding in prison doesn't pay for the training, that they do not focus on this area. One delivery staff member stated that they would struggle to support a Higher Education query, as they had not had any training from Nacro on supporting Higher Education progression and did not go to university themselves. All staff interviewed stated they would rely on the education staff in the prison to help them, but could not name a person working in the prison who supports Higher Education (e.g. "maybe the head of learning and skills could help you with that query").

### **Funding model overview**

The vast majority of the services that Nacro provides are commissioned by local authorities or by Government. Nacro do not fund raise as part of their funding model and rely on open tendering for its contracts. The current Government's agenda of driving down public spending while, at the same time, seeking to reform the delivery landscape by opening up service provision to a plurality of providers, presents both threats and opportunities to Nacro's funding model. On the one hand, Nacro's Supporting People funded housing services face significant pressure to cut costs. Such pressure is shared across Nacro's local authority crime prevention and early intervention activities. On the other hand, the agenda of reforming public services, in



particular in offender management and criminal justices services, provides Nacro with real opportunities to extend its reach, in partnership with like-minded organisations. None of these aspirations include Higher Education for offenders as a potential route to reduce crime.

### ***Trailblazer Case Study***

Information sources:

- Report and financial statements year end March 2013

### **Structure, Governance and Management**

Trailblazers aims to have not less than four Trustees at any one time, up to a maximum of ten. As soon as a serving Trustee declares their intention to resign, the Trustees will endeavour to recruit a new Trustee. From time to time the Board reviews the skills of existing Trustees and identifies skills gaps. Trustees are recruited by means of personal approach and by advertising on [charityjob.co.uk](http://charityjob.co.uk) in its Trustees section, through organisations such as Reach and Common Purpose or via the Third Sector magazine or national press.

### **Management Board**

The Board of Trustees aims to meet bi-monthly and contributes to the strategic direction and policy of the Charity. Day to day responsibility is delegated to the Chief Executive who has responsibilities in terms of: ensuring that the charity delivers the services specified; financial management, legal compliance, human resources, fundraising and marketing, public relations and risk management.

The Head of Development reports directly to the Chief Executive and has responsibilities for income generation and the achievement of agreed income targets to ensure the financial sustainability of the charity. The Head of Operations also reports directly to the Chief Executive and is responsible for ensuring that all projects are properly resourced such that they run in a way to ensure that they each meet Trailblazers' defined targets. The post holder is also responsible for the volunteers within the charity, training processes and materials, accreditation, quality and health & safety.

In all of the operating projects a Project Manager is employed. They have responsibility for the recruitment and training of mentors, and recruiting potential

mentees; whom are then matched. Those relationships are then monitored in regular supervisions, such that the mentors receive the support that they need, project Managers are in place at HMYOI Aylesbury, HMP/YOI Littlehey, HMP/YOI Brinsford, HMP/YOI Rochester and HMP/YOI Isis. Trailblazers also employ an Administration Officer based at HMYOI Aylesbury, who manages all the administration functions of the charity. Monthly management accounts are produced by an external Bookkeeper.

## **Risks**

It is now appropriate that in consultation. This new plan will reflect changes in recent activity and challenges and opportunities arising from the Governments 'Transforming Rehabilitation' proposals. However, the new plan will largely refine the previous plan and there are unlikely to be major changes to the focus of our work over the next 2-3 years.

Income to the charity remains steady and while we have shown an annual loss within our accounts, we have been able to maintain a reasonable level of financial reserves equating to about 3 months of costs. However, this does not remove the continuing need to find and secure new sources of income to sustain our work. Given the reduction in Government spending more charities are turning to major trusts & grant foundations; a source which Trailblazers has relied upon throughout its history to sustain our work and this is becoming an increasingly stretched source of funding. During 2012 we have started to diversify our income streams, something we are keen to build upon during 2013. We ensure that wherever practicable we secure support in kind, to reduce our direct expenditure and during 2012 we secured £148,000 of support in kind and pro bono support. We have also begun to secure the financial support of a wider group of stakeholders through establishing our own small lottery.

Our profile has increased significantly during 2012 among key stakeholders and we are becoming well positioned for a charity of our size. Towards the end of the year, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) consulted future of Probation Services in England in Wales and how better resettlement of those leaving custody could be achieved. The new proposals, called 'Transforming Rehabilitation' could, if passed through Parliament have an impact on our work and we are working hard to achieve the best outcome for the charity from the anticipated changes.

## **Targeted Benefit to Offenders**

The Charity/Company's Objectives are:

'for the rehabilitation of persons who are or have been subject to a criminal charge or are on remand and have suffered a restriction of liberty in one of HM's Prisons or Young Offenders Institutions by means of educational training mentoring or guidance provided to such persons so as to assist in their rehabilitation into the wider community.

Aims:

- reduce the likelihood of re-offending and the seriousness of offending by preparing offenders for release
- ease the difficult period of transition of the offender back into society following release from prison empower the young person to make positive choices by developing the mentee's self-esteem, confidence, education and knowledge of opportunities through one-to-one mentoring
- enhance the resettlement services offered by the Prison Service by using volunteer mentors to support offenders on release

Volunteer mentors are trained to listen, advise, support and challenge their mentees about their past behaviour and to help them plan their future after release.

Mentoring is primarily intended to take place inside the prison in the final six months of the mentee's sentence and continue post-release for up to a further nine months.

Mentoring consists of a structured programme delivered through the use of Tool Sets: Introduction to Mentoring, Better Relationships, Asserting Myself, Money Matters, Getting to Work, and Through the Gate

## **Achievements and performance**

In the twelve months covered by this report, Trailblazers worked with more young people, in more prisons and recruited and trained more volunteer mentors than at any time in our fourteen year history. It has been a terrific year for the charity and we have made good progress against our strategic plan. This report will summarise some of our organisational achievements.

During the year we undertook a skills audit with the Board of Trustees, as we were keen to bring on some new Board members. We were successful in attracting five new trustees, which included two young trustees who have had first-hand experience of the Criminal Justice System, a former Bank Director, a graduate who is on a fast

track prison management programme within the Ministry of Justice and a new Treasurer. I do want to express my thanks to all the new members for joining the Board and for sharing our belief. In particular would like to thank David Morgan who stepped down as our Treasurer after eight years of dedicated service to Trailblazers. Trailblazers has enjoyed another year of solid operational progress with stability in our staff team. As reported in the 2011 Report the Project Manager based at HMYOI Aylesbury moved to HMP/YOI Isis to establish this new project on behalf of the charity, which after a slow start is now progressing well. This move allowed our experienced Finance and Administration Officer the opportunity to manage our project at HMYOI Aylesbury that she has very competently achieved and this project continues to grow. Additionally in 2012 we saw the arrival of a new Head of Operations, Anthony York who joined from Depaul UK where he was the Offender Services Manager. Anthony has established himself quickly in the team and has achieved good progress through increasing our impact and evidencing more clearly the quality of our work. We have been successful in opening a fifth project at HMP/YOI Rochester in July 2012 and welcomed Princess Okwuonu to the team as the new project manager of this project.

We have learnt that it can take up to six months to establish each new project and each prison in which we work is so different. Additionally as a non-statutory service having full access with volunteer mentors drawing keys (thus giving them free movement, unescorted around the prison) is unique and does take time to establish and for us to become known and trusted. Prison Governors remain very complimentary and supportive of the service we provide and for the first time in our history our volunteer mentors are now drawing keys in HMYOI Aylesbury.

Overall during the year, there were 193 relationships between mentors and mentees (an increase of almost 100% from 2011), and new matches have been made on a steady basis throughout the year. By the year-end, Trailblazers had 129 active mentors across the three projects (an increase of over 100% from the previous year), with a mix of male and female mentors and a broad spectrum of age range and ethnic background.

Including those in training or awaiting security clearance, or matching with a mentee that number increases to over 180 volunteers. The active mentors gave on average over 10 hours of their time each month to the charity, and we remain most grateful for their efforts. As always, volunteer mentors are the lifeblood of the Trailblazers without which we would not be here.

However, the success of Trailblazers work is measured in the achievement of our goal, to reduce reoffending and the consequent return to custody of young people. In 2012 only 10% of those young people released whom were mentored by Trailblazers were returned to custody. Compared with a national level of 73.8%, our performance remains strong and provides evidence of our effective interventions. In addition, of those released, 51% had secured an education, training or employment outcome (ETE) within six months of release, which again is good when compared the national level of 36%.

### **Funding model overview**

In 2012 Trailblazers income was £442K (£218k in 2011) with expenditure of £540K (£331 in 2011), posting a loss of £98K. They declared cash reserves of £140k.

Trailblazers' primary funding sources continue to be charitable trusts and foundations, but the four-year grant from the National Lottery for the work at Littlehey is also significant. In total Trailblazer have 49 separate grants ranging from £1,000 (Open Gate) to £93,000 (Big Lottery) in a single year, plus a few donations.

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